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GOETHE'S RELATION TO ROMANTIC MUSIC

by

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## GOETHE'S RELATION TO ROMANTIC MUSIC

### I

Besides being Germany's greatest poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe has been recognized as a statesman, philosopher, scientist, artist, and musician. His recognition as a musician is not deserved if it is based on actual performance or compositions; because, although he played, composed, wrote libretti, directed choirs and operas, made a study of the major and minor modes, and interested himself generally in all kinds of music, he was not great as a musician. Music was to him only "ein tief und treu geliebte Lebensgefährtin."<sup>1</sup> The kind of music in which Goethe excelled was the music of language. As a poet, Goethe gave the initial impulse to the development of the new artsong and inspired some of the greatest instrumental works of the Romantic period.

Goethe was born in Frankfurt on August 28, 1749. His father has been described as "a cold, stern, formal, somewhat pedantic, but truth-loving, upright-minded man."<sup>2</sup> His craving for thoroughness and exactness of acquiring and communicating knowledge and the almost pedantic attention to details were transmitted to his son, and these characteristics are noticeable throughout the life and works of Wolfgang. Johann Caspar Goethe, the father, was descended from German working-men (the grandfather had come to Frankfurt as a tailor's apprentice), but through his diligence in the pursuit of his profession of law and through his marriage to Katherine Elizabeth Textor, he had made the Goethe name one of the most highly respected in the city. Frau Rat, as his wife was called, was the

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1. "A deep and truly beloved life companion."  
Hans John, Goethe und die Musik, Langensalza, 1927, p. 1.
  2. G. H. Lewes, Life of J. W. von Goethe, New York, 1902, P. 10.



daughter of Frankfurt's highest official, the City Governor, and a descendant of a long line of cultured ancestors. From her came the more poetic and romantic side of Goethe's nature. She was "healthy and unaffected, natural and extremely vivacious, with a fund of good humor and jolly good moods that simply would not be influenced by any sort of adversity, warm of heart and free of care, a true daughter of the Rhineland."<sup>3</sup>

Since the Goethes had now risen to the ranks of the élite, one would expect to find in their home the same marks of refinement and polish that were found with the upper middle-class throughout urban Germany in this period. The first symbol of culture was the possession of a clavier. "Klavierspielen gehörte zum 'guten Ton' und damals wie auch heute noch war das Klavier das Instrument jeder besseren Familie und durfte in<sup>4</sup> keinen Hause fehlen."

Frau Rat played on the clavier quite well and liked to sing Italian and German arias. It is said that Wolfgang, who enjoyed listening to his mother, learned many of these arias by heart before he knew the<sup>5</sup> meaning of the words. His father played the flute and also the lute, but there is little evidence of his having had much real appreciation of music.

The time came in the natural course of education at home when the mother saw to it that the children were given lessons on the clavier. She engaged Herr Bismann, who was able enough but quite eccentric. Abert says of him: "Er hatte eine zwar etwas schnurige, aber dem kindlichen Fassungsvermögen mit Phantasie und Humor entgegenkommende

3. G. Brandes, Goethe, New York, 1925, vol. I, p. 40.

4. "Clavier playing was a part of the 'social tone' and at that time as today, the clavier was the instrument of every 'better' family and no house could be without one."  
Hans John, op. cit., p. 1.

5. Edgar Istel, Goethe and Music, Art. in Musical Quarterly, vol. XIV, p. 217.





Methode, die auch Goethe zeitlebens in Erinnerung blieb."<sup>6</sup>

The little Wolfgang also had opportunities to hear music outside of his home. In 1759, the opera comique of Paris came to Frankfurt to entertain the French soldiers then stationed there. The Goethe house was occupied by the Comte de Thoranc whose military rank was that of royal lieutenant of infantry. Fortunately, Thoranc was a man of well-developed artistic tastes. He took Goethe with him to the theater, and he allowed him to listen in on conversations of artists, players, and other visitors who upset Johann Caspar Goethe by their continual bustling about the house. But Wolfgang and Frau Rat enjoyed these opportunities, and through them the young boy learned something of the French language and temperament. His first ideas of the stage and theater came from the French.

Goethe also became acquainted with the Opera Buffa when an Italian opera troupe came to Frankfurt. Abert says: "Es ist sehr bezeichnend, dass die italienischen Werke alsbald seinen Nachbildnertrieb weckten, ein Beweis für die aussergewöhnliche Empfänglichkeit des Knaben; aber auch die französischen Eindrücke blieben dauernd in seiner Seele haften."<sup>7</sup>

Goethe's family took him as often as possible to church and to concerts. One concert which particularly impressed him was that given by the little seven-year old Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. It was in 1763 when Goethe was only fourteen, but many years later he recalled the night in which he saw the little boy, bewigged and girded with a sword, perform for the Frankfurt audience. Mozart was at that time on one of his early tours of

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6. "He doubtless had a somewhat comical method but one which he presented to the child's power of comprehension with humor and imagination, so that it remained in Goethe's memory all his life."  
Hermann Abert, *Goethe und die Musik*, Stuttgart, 1922, p. 12.

7. "It is very characteristic that the Italian works aroused him to imitate them as soon as they did, a proof of the unusual susceptibility of the boy; but also a lasting impression of the French works remained in his memory."  
Hermann Abert, *op. cit.*, p. 13.



Europe as a child prodigy. This incident is significant, for we shall observe Goethe's fondness for Mozart's music all through his life.

In 1765, Goethe enrolled as a student at the University of Leipzig. His father had pictured his son as following him in the law profession, and he sent Wolfgang to Leipzig to bring home a law degree; but the young boy had no interest in law, and his head was turned by the gay social life of Leipzig. He quickly fell in line with the rest of society who would be French. He became "Monsieur" Goethe, the dandy. None of his activities in Leipzig impressed themselves deeply enough to be permanent in the mind of the mature Goethe.

In Frankfurt, Goethe had heard the Italian and French song-plays, but he heard for the first time in Leipzig the German Singspiele. C. F. Weiss and J. A. Hiller had just recently written "Die verwandelten Weibe", and it had been successfully produced by Koch's company in Leipzig, in 1764.<sup>8</sup> The Singspiele won almost immediate popularity, and many of them, both good and bad, were written and produced. Goethe came into manhood during the period of their popularity, and we shall later deal with his attempts at their composition.

Goethe's first lyrical productions were a series of little songs in the style of the songs of the Singspiele. He found a publisher for them in Bernhard Theodor Breitkopf, grandson of the founder of Breitkopf and Hartel, the music publishing house which has helped for generations to make Leipzig an important music center. The little songs appeared in print as "Neue Lieder", but, as Hermann Grimm says, "It would be no marvel if we should find a French original for each of them."<sup>9</sup>

In 1768, Goethe returned to Frankfurt, ill and discouraged. After two barren years at home, on April 2, 1770, he went to Strasburg to com-

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8. Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, vol. IV, Art. on Singspiele  
 9. Hermann Grimm, The Life and Times of Goethe, Boston, 1881, p. 35.



plete his study of law. "Now begins the time when every word which drops from Goethe's pen is memorable," says Grimm. "Now, for the first time in his life, he meets a superior nature, a man whom he felt to be greater than himself." <sup>10</sup> In the autumn of 1771 Herder appeared in Strassburg.

Goethe was twenty-one years old, and he needed the relationship with someone whom he must acknowledge to be his superior. "Goethe had intuitively recognized the right direction: now Herder came to show him the way." <sup>11</sup> Herder's has been called "the most musical temperament among German poets of the 'classical period.'" <sup>12</sup> He showed Goethe the fundamentally musical foundation upon which poetry is built. By teaching him the beauty of the folk songs, he inspired Goethe to explore the country-side for them and to use them as the model for his own lyrics.

No less important an influence on Goethe at this time was his love affair with Friederike Brion, a young daughter of a parson at Sesenheim. In the tenth and eleventh books of Dichtung und Wahrheit, Goethe tells his own story of his love. We cannot accept this as fact, but we know that the memory of her fired his imagination and the poems addressed to her give proof of her influence. They are quite superior to anything he had previously written. Therefore, we recognize in Friederike, as in Herder, the power of having stimulated and quickened the emotional sensitivity of the young Goethe.

For some strange reason, Goethe took violincello lessons in this period under a certain Herr Basch. Abert says: "Wir wissen nicht, was ihn zur Wahl dieses Instrumentes bewog, das damals noch keineswegs das Gesangsinstrument von heute war und erst allmählich aus seiner alten

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10. Ibid., p. 37.

11. Ibid., p. 55.

12. Edgar Istel, op. cit., p. 218.



Rolle eines bassführenden Instrumentes herauszuwachsen begann." <sup>13</sup> The only way in which one might justify Goethe's interest in an instrument which served only as the bass for harmony at this time is that perhaps he began to see beyond the purely lyric surface of music in somewhat the same way that he was being spiritually awakened to greater depth in other things. However, this is mere conjecture.

Hans John mentions Goethe's having played a flute at some time during his pre-Weimar career, but other than this and his smattering of practice on the clavier and cello, Goethe's training in applied music as such is <sup>14</sup> non-existent. Certainly up to this point, Goethe's interest in music was of a dilettante nature. Herder's influence is perhaps the only one which will be felt to any great degree on the immortal side of Goethe's work.

When Goethe's stay at the University in Strassburg was over, a brief visit to his native town, Frankfurt, brought him into the acquaintance of Johann Andre, who was a composer of lieder and singspiele, and was much influenced by the French spirit. His "Töpfer," produced in 1773, caused Goethe to complete his first singspiel, "Erwin und Elmire."

On November 7, 1775, Goethe arrived in Weimar at the invitation of <sup>15</sup> Karl August. His life up to this time had been well planned and regulated by his attentive parents. He had been gathering up the many experiences which his life had given him, but now the time had come for him to give rather than to receive. He was twenty-six years old. "At this stage in the development of a man, a change usually takes place; the desire to

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13. "We do not know what led him to choose this instrument, which at that time was in no way the singing instrument that it is today but was just beginning to grow away from its old role of merely furnishing the bass."

Hermann Abert, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

14. Hans John, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

15. For details concerning Goethe's coming to Weimar, refer to Georg Brandes' Life of Goethe, or any other recognized biography.





learn, to receive, to form attachments, to subordinate oneself, passes<sup>16</sup> over into the necessity to impart, to teach, to command." This, at least, is what happened to Goethe.

In this period of history, Weimar was one of the two great centers of intellectual life of Germany; the other was Jena. "Probably never in the history of mankind has there been a period when men looked at things from as broad a point of view and with so little bias. Humanity in the largest sense was the chosen study of the age. Everywhere--in language, in literature, in political institutions, in religion--men tried to detect the human element and brought it to light with all the fearlessness of scientific ardor."<sup>17</sup> It was a period in which there were two definite classes: those who clung to the idea of "divine right of kings" and the stability of all things deep-rooted in tradition; and those who took the opposite stand, knowing that the only way in which man as an individual could gain recognition was by a sudden breaking of the bonds of tradition and authority which had held him fast for so long. Many of those who recognized the necessity of a change did not realize that it was destined to come so soon, but the impetus was given by such thinkers as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot in France; John Locke in England; and Thomas Jefferson in the new country. Germany was the last to feel it, possibly due to its being the least bound by the chains of oppression of a strongly centralized government. However, the germs of individualism and natural rights spread there quickly, and Weimar, being the center that it was, was the hot-bed for new ideas. "Truly Weimar swarmed with men whose mental activity was not to be denied. Each man was at that time sitting beside the stream of new ideas with his line out, hoping to bring some big fish to land."<sup>18</sup> Wieland had come to Weimar from Erfurt in 1772, at the invi-

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16. Herman Grimm, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

17. Kuno Francke, History of German Literature, New York, 1913, pp. 333-334.

18. Grimm, op. cit., p. 2.



tation of the Grandduchess Anna Amalia. She was attracted by his book, Golden Mirrors. Herder came there through Goethe's influence very soon after Goethe was settled.

The music of Weimar was at this time over-shadowed by the greater attention paid to poetry and the drama. The more brilliant era of music came toward the middle of the nineteenth century when the very movement of which we are speaking in literature found expression in music. Music is always the last of the arts to be impressed by outside forces, for it is only when those forces have pierced the most profound springs of the spirit that they can be expressed by that most spiritual of arts. That music played as large a part in the aesthetic life of Weimar at that time is to the credit of the Grandduchess Anna Amalia. Being herself a lover of music, she drew around her those who loved both to perform and to discuss. "Kein Tag verging," says John, "wo bei der Herzogin-Mutter nicht musiziert worden wäre."<sup>19</sup> Abert says: "Man musizierte nicht bloss, sondern besprach auch ästhetische Fragen und suchte besonders die Musik mit dem allgemeinen Geistesleben der Zeit in Zusammenhang zu bringen."<sup>20</sup> Such names as Siegmund von Seckendorff, Ernest Wilhelm Wolf, August Eberhardt Müller and Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Abert mentions as having been prominent in music at the Weimar court. Of all these, Wolf was the most prominent. He was a prolific composer of every type of music and also wrote several books on musical subjects. He was made Konzertmeister in 1761 and court Kapellmeister in 1768.<sup>21</sup> Hummel came to Weimar in 1817 and was installed as Kapellmeister. He was, according to Rolland, the most

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19. "Not a day passed in which the Grandduchess did not have musicians perform for her."  
John, op. cit., p. 2.
20. "They not only played, but they also discussed aesthetic questions and tried especially to bring music into connection with the general intellectual life of the time."  
Abert, op. cit., p. 20.
21. Article on Wolf, Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, New York, 1927, vol. V, p. 748.



famous piano virtuoso of his time. He had the distinction of being Mozart's<sup>22</sup> only pupil, and he was a friend of Beethoven.

Since the days when Bach had been court organist in Weimar (1708-1717), the emphasis had changed toward the German Singspiele until finally in 1773, with the production of Wieland's and Schweitzer's Alceste, German opera held an important place there. This fact made Goethe's directorship of the Weimar theatre another important source of musical contact.

Frau von Stein, who was the outstanding feminine influence on Goethe in these times, was also musical. She played the clavier and the lute; her husband played the flute, and her brothers the cello and glass harmonica. Goethe himself did not perform with the others. Perhaps he did not feel proficient enough and perhaps he had realized that performing is not the sole means of enjoying music. He not only enjoyed Anna Amalia's circle and the music in Frau von Stein's house, but he had weekly gatherings at his own house. In Goethe's Conversations with Eckermann, we may gain some idea of the importance of music in Goethe's last years in his home. There are recorded innumerable instances when Herr Schmidt or Herr Hummel played for the assembled friends in the evening, or the opera, The Count of Gleichen, by Eberwein was given at Goethe's house. These are a few examples of what Eckermann tells us, but these are incidents much later than Goethe's first years at Weimar. Long before Eckermann became his amanuensis, music had become a necessary part of his life. There was never any length of time after his entrance into Anna Amalia's circle in which Goethe did not have available some friend who could play and discuss music with him. The three who were in closest touch with him were Kayser, Reichardt and Zelter.

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22. Romain Rolland, Goethe and Beethoven, New York, 1931, p. 77.



None of these three has had any permanent claim to fame. It may seem strange that Goethe did not link himself with musicians of greater genius. But it is, after all, quite natural that he did not for two reasons: first, his own mediocrity of musical taste, and secondly, his need for a personality weaker than his own who would be willing to yield to his demands. Many attempts were made on the parts of both musicians and the poet to league together, but none were so successful as these three, in which alliances the musicians were so much the weaker.

Goethe left Weimar to travel in Italy from 1786 to 1788. It was during this trip that he felt the need of an understanding musician who would set his words to music. Previously, he had attempted an alliance with Gluck, but that was in 1774, when Iphigenie en Aulide had been so<sup>23</sup> successfully received in Paris that Gluck felt a hesitancy in stooping to Goethe's level! But Christoph Kayser, who was teaching in Zurich at the time, welcomed the opportunity and met Goethe in Rome in November of 1787. They had been friends before in Frankfurt, the native town of both. Kayser immediately began planning to write the music for Egmont and discussed Singspiele with Goethe. He introduced Goethe to the old Italian Church music during the Lenten services of 1788. Goethe was extremely impressed by it and found in it something "'ganz Ausserordentliches' und<sup>24</sup> einen 'ganz neuen Begriff.'" The two men were also much interested in the songs of the boatmen which they heard as they traveled about the Italian cities at night. Goethe was very kind to Kayser and very patiently tried to coax him into some state of fruitful productivity, but Kayser found it difficult to meet his demands. Soon after they returned from

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23. Istel, op. cit., p. 218.

24. "'Quite extraordinary' and an entirely new conception."  
Abert, op. cit., p. 25.





Italy, the break came. Goethe had found someone else who appeared to suit his purposes better. That was Johann Friedrich Reichardt, whom he met in 1789.

Reichardt was a restless and moody person, and not very dependable. He had traveled a great deal, but Berlin had been the center of his activity. The musical life of Berlin under Frederick the Great and Frederick William II had been enriched through his efforts. But, like so many artists of all sorts during this period, he became involved in politics and lost his position in Berlin because he favored the Revolution of 1794. He was a composer of lieder and dramatic music. Abert says of him: "Er war einer der ersten, die ihre Grundsätze durch den systematischen Anschluss an die klassische Dichtung, vor allem an Goethe, erweiterten und dadurch<sup>25</sup> das ganze nordeutsche Lied verjüngten." In Berlin, he had founded a Lieder school, the principle of which coincided exactly with Goethe's<sup>26</sup> own views: "the composer's music must interpret the poet's words." Reichardt, since 1780, had been enthusiastic over Goethe's poems and had set many of them to music. He was far more in sympathy with Goethe's artistic ideas than Kayser had ever been. Goethe was not the one to urge Reichardt on, but rather Reichardt often begged Goethe to write more libretti that he might set to music. They planned together a lyric drama inspired by Ossianic lore, but Goethe's interest in operettas, which for so long had been ardent to no purpose, had begun to wane. His mind was pre-occupied with natural science, and so their plans never came to fruition. Reichardt lost his position as Hofkapellmeister, and, although Goethe was made Oberdirektor of the Weimar theater in 1791, there was no

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25. Abert, op. cit., p. 27.

"He was one of the first who widened the fundamental principles (of the song) through the systematic adoption of classical poetry and above all of Goethe's, and thereby rejuvenated the entire north-German Lied."

26. Rolland, op. cit., p. 143.



place available to them which was adequate for the production of the proposed lyric drama. This alone would have prevented Goethe from completing the proposed work based on Ossian, because he had to know beforehand the theater, actors, and public for whom the work was intended. Reichardt was fast losing out with the poet due to Schiller's complete disapproval of him, and the result was a definite enmity after 1795.

Zelter was first brought to Goethe's attention in 1795 by his setting of a poem by Friederike Brun in Reichardt's Musikalischer Blumenlese. In 1796, Zelter began work on Goethe's Lieder. In 1799, they began a correspondence which was terminated only by death. Goethe was again enthusiastic in the hope that he had found someone who would collaborate with him in writing music dramas, but he was to be greatly disappointed. Zelter was of a stronger character and, in some respects, a greater musician than Reichardt. Real inspiration was rarer with Zelter than with Reichardt, but Zelter was a hard-working theorist with the intelligence and persistence to apply his theories. He was moderately progressive and is important for his part in the development of the free form of the song, although he can in no way be compared to Schubert, Schumann or any of the better known song-writers. Goethe's poems fired his imagination, and he could not set enough of them to music for his own satisfaction. He told Goethe, "there was no need for him to search for new melodies; all he had to do was to find those which were already in the poet's mind unknown to him." Goethe's dream, however, was to create, in collaboration with a musician, great epic and dramatic works, and Zelter was not equal to such demands. Just as he had done with Kayser and Reichardt, he made plans, only to find they could not be carried out. Zelter could not get beyond the individual songs.

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27. Rolland, op. cit., p. 146.



The relation between these two men was one of deep devotion. Goethe was by far the more powerful of the two and consequently more independent, but Zelter's life had its whole meaning in Goethe after they met in 1802. And when Goethe died, it was as though Zelter died with him. Zelter served as Goethe's musical adviser, and, although Zelter may be largely responsible for some of Goethe's lack of understanding of greater musicians, their friendship certainly stimulated Goethe's love for music. We are forced, however, to lament the fact that it was Zelter who was the chosen musician when Goethe was so full of ideas for lyric dramas.

Goethe knew many other musicians, not only through their music, but through their visits to his house. As he grew in name and fame, we find his house more and more a meeting ground for prominent artists, musicians, and writers. It will be fitting here only to mention some of the more prominent musicians who found themselves in his company. Any details not given here will find their proper niche in further discussions of Goethe's relation to romantic music.

First of all, is the story of his meeting with Beethoven which has been so graphically told by M. Rolland in his book entitled Goethe and Beethoven. Their actual contact with each other was short enough: In July of 1812, Goethe was called to Teplitz from Karlsbad to meet the Empress of Austria. On July 19, Goethe called on Beethoven, and in a letter to his wife, Christiana, he summed up his first impressions: "Never before have I met an artist of more powerful concentration, more energy or deeper sincerity."<sup>28</sup> On the following day, the two walked together, at which time they passed the coach bearing the empress. Goethe with his propriety and social grace stepped aside with a low bow, while Beethoven, humble only to Goethe himself, placed his hat more firmly on his head, squared his shoulders,

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28. Rolland, op. cit., p. 44.



and continued on his walk. In a letter to Breitkopf and Hartel on August 9, 1812, Beethoven gives his impression of Goethe: "Court air suits Goethe more than becomes a poet. One cannot laugh much at the ridiculous things that virtuosi do when poets, who ought to be looked upon as the principal teachers of the nation, forget everything else amidst this glitter."<sup>29</sup>

They saw each other twice after that, on July 21 and 23. Beethoven was then called to Karlsbad, and when he got back to Teplitz, Goethe had gone. They never met again. That is the story of their acquaintance. Bettina von Arnim, then Bettina Brentano, was the intermediary through whom the two met. She wrote to Goethe (May 28, 1810) telling him of her first meeting with Beethoven and how she was impressed. He had played for her two songs, Mignon and Trocknet nicht, Tränen. She had spoken to him at length of Goethe, and Beethoven had expressed a strong desire to meet him. He had said: "If any one can give him an understanding of music, it is I."<sup>30</sup>

Bettina told each of the men about the greatness of the other, but more particularly did she extol Beethoven to Goethe because the latter needed no praise in Beethoven's eyes. But it was to no avail, as their short acquaintance was wholly unprofitable and they were totally ungenial.

Franz Schubert once made an attempt to break the ice with Goethe. He sent him two sets of songs to Goethe's words and asked that he might

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29. Ludwig Beethoven, Letters of, No. 132, to Breitkopf and Hartel, August 9, 1812, Edited by A. Eaglefield-Hull, J. M. Dent and Sons, London, 1926, p. 134.

30. Goethe, Correspondence with a Child, Bettina's letter to Goethe, June 15, 1810. Edited by B. von Arnim, Ticknor and Fields, Boston 1869, p. 290. Some of the letters from Bettina in this collection may not be wholly authentic. The one of May 28, 1810, is said to have been created by Frau von Arnim in 1835, when the first edition appeared. However, even though they may be colored by her imagination, the general impressions are doubtless very reliable.





dedicate them to him. One of them was his setting of Der Erl König. But Schubert was little known then, and so his letter was not answered!

Mendelssohn was one of the very few famous musicians who personally delighted Goethe. That was due partly to the fact that Mendelssohn was very young when he visited him and partly to the fact that Zelter had been one of his teachers. But in October, 1821, Zelter introduced the twelve-year old boy to Goethe. Felix played Bach fugues for him. Goethe liked his playing so well that he had him come often. He requested Mendelssohn to play Bach, Haydn, and Mozart. The Fifth Symphony of Beethoven, Goethe admitted, had a strange and weird effect on him when Mendelssohn played it. Mendelssohn left for Italy, and Goethe, in gratitude, gave him a leaf of the autograph of Faust with an inscription on it.

Goethe knew Carl Maria von Weber, not only through having heard Freischütz and Euryanthe, but also personally. He had, however, no great liking for his person, his mind or his music, and Rolland tells us of an incident which reminds us somewhat of his attitude toward Beethoven. Weber went to call at Goethe's house in July, 1825. Although Weber's name was known throughout Germany for his operas, Goethe did not see fit to recognize him with much respect. When he finally saw him, he was very cold, and the subject of music was not mentioned. This hurt von Weber very deeply, probably partly due to the fact that he was already ill of the malady of which he died very shortly.

Many other prominent people called at Goethe's door. Among them were: Paganini, the great violin virtuosi of Europe; Friedrich Wieck with his daughter, Clara (later the wife of Robert Schumann); and Maria Szymanowska, the beautiful Polish pianist.



## II

During the period from 1775 to 1795, Goethe had eight Singspiele published. None of these was very great, although some of Goethe's loveliest songs are found in them. Their inferiority is not only due to the fact that the right composer was never found for the task, but also to the fact that Goethe wrote them as an outlet and a change from his usual serious and carefully executed masterpieces. The Singspiel was merely a popular source of entertainment and diversion of Goethe's time. It corresponded to the Opera Comique of France and the Opera Buffa of Italy. In every case, this type of light drama interspersed with song was one of the transitional stages from the Miracle Plays to modern Opera.

The German Singspiel found a home in Hamburg in the theatre built in 1678, but soon encountered a formidable rival in German opera, founded by Reinhard Keiser. After this, a half century passed before the Singspiel was heard of again. In 1743, the Döbbelin Company in Berlin produced a Liederspiel, Der Teufel ist los, founded on the English play of the same type, The Devil to Pay. That company had a series of successful productions and encouraged Koch's Company to open in Leipzig, Weimar, and Berlin, with Der Verwandelten Liebe, written by C. F. Weisse and composed by J. A. Hiller. This also was based on the English play, The Devil to Pay. Singspiele became quite popular, both in the north of Germany and around Vienna. Haydn was, at that time, at the court of Prince Esterhazy and furnished the court with a number of marionette plays, which were nothing more nor less than



Singspiele.

When Goethe was a young boy, he had heard French and Italian song-plays in Frankfurt. Later, he had the good fortune to be in Leipzig when Koch's company was there presenting Hiller's real German Singspiele, which were written on the same order as The Beggar's Opera and The Devil to Pay. He was so much impressed by these that his earliest poems, collected and published as the Leipziger Liederbuch, were written in the Singspiel style. In 1773, he again became enthusiastic over this type, when he was at Offenbach visiting in the home of Johann Andre, whose Singspiel, Der Topfer, had recently been successfully performed. At that time, Goethe confided in Andre his own plans for his first Singspiel, Erwin und Elmire. This began the whole series of Goethe's efforts in this direction. At first, he modelled his plays more after the manner of the French Opera Comique, which may be seen in the 1775 editions of Erwin und Elmire and Claudine von Villa Bella. But later his interest was turned to the Italian Opera Buffa. This enthusiasm was aroused even before his trip to Italy and his study of Italian music with Kayser, when a travelling company came to Weimar in 1777 under Anton Berger and when the Bellomoschen Company came in 1784. The universality of Goethe's genius made him quick to see the possibilities for improvement in every phase of literature upon which he touched. Even in this relatively unimportant field he had a purpose, which was: "die italienische opera buffa nach Deutschland zu verpflanzen, aber zugleich<sup>1</sup> auch durch bessere Texte diese ganze Kunstgattung zu heben." Goethe's

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31. "To transplant the Opera Buffa to Germany, but at the same time to raise this whole type of art through better texts."  
K. J. Schröer, Introduction to Singspiele, Goethe's Werke, vol. VII, Stuttgart, 1873, p. VII.



texts come nearer to realizing this goal than critics give them credit for, but we are apt to judge his Singspiele in the light of his best dramas and poems, and then there is no comparison. He lacked the knowledge of the technical end of music, and he found no suitable composer to work with him. It was important to have good texts, but in the Singspiele, almost as much as in the Opera itself, the texts went for nothing if the music was not interesting. Goethe realized his lack. He knew all along that he needed better composers to collaborate with him, but his hopes of finding one were in vain. Many times he planned lyric dramas, but never carried them out because he knew it would be better to let them exist in his mind than to have them executed and thus be disillusioned. He never gave up the hope of finding a composer and working out with him a type of Singspiel that would be on a higher plane than that of his contemporaries until Mozart produced his Entführung aus dem Serail. He realized that Mozart, though his text was poor, had outdone anything that he could ever have hoped to do in that line. He wrote from Rome in November, 1787: "Alles unser Bemühen daher, uns im Einfachen und Beschränkten abzuschliessen, ging verloren, als Mozart auftritt. 'Die Entführung aus dem Serail' schlug alles nieder, und es ist auf dem Theater von unserem so sorgsam gearbeiteten Stück niemals die Rede gewesen."<sup>32</sup>

This work, which Goethe resented at first because of its superiority, appeared July 12, 1782, and founded the classic Singspiel. Die Zauberflöte, written by Mozart and produced in 1791, was also

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32. "All our efforts to confine ourselves to the simple and the limited, were lost, when Mozart stepped in. 'Die Entführung aus dem Serail' defeated everything, and it has been the talk of the theater as our little pieces so carefully worked over never were." Goethe, Italienische Reise, Zweiter Band, in Goethes Werke, vol. XXI, November, 1787, p. 140.





styled a Singspiel on the title page of the portfolio score. But from this time on, the Singspiel proper became continually rarer, and opera replaced it almost entirely. The border line between opera and Singspiel is sometimes almost indistinguishable, but the essential difference is this: "The latter by no means excludes occasional recitative in place of the spoken dialogue, but the moment the music helps to develop the dramatic denouement, we have to do with opera and not with Singspiel."<sup>33</sup>

Goethe's work on the Singspiel, therefore, came at the end of their time of prominence in Germany. Even though his little plays of this type were not as successful as he hoped for them to be, they are not only interesting, but important for their autobiographical content, for the lovely songs in them which were later used by other composers separately, and for their musical value as Goethe intended them to be, rather than as they actually were.

Erwin und Elmire was the first to appear. It was published in March, 1775, in The Iris, a Frankfort periodical. Both this one and his second song-play, Claudine von Villa Bella, were inspired by Lili Schöman, the pretty sixteen-year old banker's daughter of Frankfort, about whom Goethe tells in Book VII of Dichtung und Wahrheit. The two were totally unsuited to each other, although very much in love. She was a coquette, young and simple, content to follow the conventions of society and anxious to outdo her friends in gaiety. Goethe was older than Lili, and a poet who cared nothing for the vanities of society and sought only for unrestrained freedom. However, because of his infatuation for Lili, he let himself be taken to elegant parties and did the things which society demanded. They were

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33. Dr. Frenz Gehring, Article on Singspiel, Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, New York, 1929, vol. IV, p. 772.

[illegible]

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engaged to be married, and Goethe thought himself extremely happy in this social whirl. The poet in him was momentarily suppressed, and he seemed rather like the boy he had been in Leipzig. But this was not for long. Gradually he learned the difference between their two worlds, and knew that they were incompatible. But this realization only served to make him restless and unhappy. He resented the petty conventionalities that would keep them apart, but he knew they existed. He was not strong enough to give up Lili, nor sufficiently in love to marry her. Finally, the engagement was broken off. Years later, after Lili had died, Goethe looked back upon his affair with Lili and said: "I have never been so near a happiness after my own heart as during the time of this love for Lili. The obstacles which separated us were not really insurmountable, and yet she was lost to me! My affection for her had about it something so delicate, and something so peculiar, that even now, in the representation of that painfully happy epoch, it has an influence upon my style."<sup>34</sup>

It was during this period, before he went to Switzerland with the Stolbergs, that he completed Erwin und Elmire, Claudine von Villa Bella and Stella. Each of them is a different manifestation of the conflict in Goethe's mind over Lili, between superficiality and depth of soul, play and passion, society and nature. "Dass Goethe seinen Konflikt mit Lili in solcher halbspielerischen Art behandelte bewiest nicht wie wenig er sie liebte sondern wie sehr er sie liebte: nämlich dass das gesellschaftliche Mädchen Macht genug über ihn ausübte um den Dichter in ihm zurückzudrängen bis zum Maître de Plaisir, vor ihr erschien er nicht als der gewaltige Schöpfer sondern als der zärtliche und zierliche Spieler und Zauberer, der selbst den wühlenden

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34. Goethe, Conversations with Eckermann, Friday, March 5, 1830, p. 446.



Schmerzen seiner Innern für Momente Einhalt gebot." In the first edition, Goethe uses the character of Olympia, Elmire's mother, for his mouthpiece to ridicule the conventions of the day which took Lili away from him:

"Elmire: Unsre Kenntnisse, unsre Talente!

Olimpia: Das ist eben das verfluchte Zeug, das euch entweder nichts hilft oder euch wohl gar unglücklich macht. Wir wussten von all der Firtlpanzerei nichts; wir tappelten unser Liedchen, unsern Menuet auf dem Klavier, und sangen und tanzten darzu; jetzt vergeht den armen Kindern das Singen und Tanzen bei ihren Instrmenten, sie werden auf die Geschwindigkeit dressiert, und müssen staet Einfacher Melodien, ein Geklimpere treiben, das sie Ängstigt und nicht unterhält; und wozu? Um sich zu produzieren! Um bewundert zu werden! Vor wem? Wo? Vor Leuten, die nichts verstehen, oder plaudern, oder nur herzlich passen, bis ihr fertig seid, um sich auch zu produzieren und auch nicht geachtet, und doch am Ende, aus Gewohnheit oder Spatt; bekatscht zu werden."

35. "That Goethe treated his conflict with Lili in such a half-playful way indicates not how little he loved her, but rather how much he loved her. Similarly it indicates that the sociable girl exercised enough power over him to suppress the poet until he became temporarily a Maître de Plaisir. To her he appeared not as the powerful creator, but as the tender and dainty player, and magician, who himself ordered the raging pain in his soul to cease for moments."

Friedrich Gundolf, Goethe, Berlin, 1930, P. 202-3.

36. Elmire: Our knowledge, our talents!

Olimpia: That is just the accursed trouble, which either profits you nothing or makes you quite unhappy. We knew nothing of all this nonsense; we picked out our little song and minuet on the clavier, and sang and danced to it. Now the joy of singing and dancing to their instruments is lost to the poor children; they are trained in speed, and, instead of a simple melody, they have to busy themselves with a strumming which distresses them and does not entertain them, and why? In order to show off. To be admired! By whom? Why? By the people, who understand nothing, or chat, or wait hopefully until you are through; just so they can show off in their turn, and in spite of everything, to be applauded at the end, whether the applause is from custom or in ridicule.

Goethe, Erwin und Elmire, Goethe's Werke, vol VII, p. 7.



All through the play one sees the attempt to understand why he had to suffer; an effort to justify his world against Lili's, and to show his pains and joys and Lili's repentance. Some authorities say that Goethe intruded Erwin und Elmire for an occasional piece to celebrate Herder's marriage to Caroline. Herder was quite hesitant in proposing to Caroline. This shyness and humility of Herder's is brought out in the hero, Erwin, and there are other traits in Erwin which seem to come from Herder, just as Elmire often seems as much modelled after Caroline as after Lili. But a definite source of this Singspiel is the ballad, Edwin and Angelina, which Mr. Burchell reads in Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield, which Herder and Goethe read together in 1770-71. They are both told in the same simple, unpretentious way. The plot in both hinges upon the repentance of a maiden who has been too haughty with her lover. She goes to a hermit to seek solace for her grief and finds that the hermit is her lover in disguise. By a comparison of the part from each in which the heroine enters the hermit's cell, we may get some idea of the similarity of tone: In Mr. Barchell's ballad, Angelina speaks:

"And, 'Ah! forgive a stranger rude,  
A wretch forlorn,' she cried;  
'Whose feet unhallowed thus intrude  
Where heaven and you reside.

'But let a maid thy pity share,  
Whom love has taught to stray:  
Who seeks for rest, but finds despair  
Companion of her way!'"<sup>37</sup>

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37. Oliver Goldsmith, The Vicar of Wakefield, Goldsmith's Political Works, Frederick Warne and Company, London, p. 279.





And in the same mood Elmore speaks:

"Sieh mich, Heiliger, wie ich bin,

Eine arme Sünderin.

Angst und Kummer, hen' und Schmerz

Quälen dieses arme Herz.

Sieh mich vor dir unverstellt.

Herr, die Schuldigste der Welt." <sup>38</sup>

In the second edition, after the prose dialogue has been removed and the character of Olympia has been omitted, the play becomes even more like the ballad.

The name, Erwin, was probably derived from one of Goethe's boyhood heroes, Erwin von Steinbach, who was the architect of the Strassburg Cathedral. It is interesting to note that Erwin was a hermit and a solitary sufferer, following the fashion started in France by Rousseau at Montmorency.

The music for the first edition of Erwin und Elmore was written by Johann Andre with whom Goethe had first discussed the plan. The play enjoyed some popularity, more on account of the public enthusiasm for that type of entertainment than for the value of the play itself. It was performed in Berlin twenty-two times between 1775 and 1782. But Goethe was never satisfied with it. Later, when he was in Italy with Kayser, and through Kayser's edifying conversations had learned to appreciate the Opera Buffa, he decided to rewrite it, making those changes mentioned above and inserting another pair of lovers, Rosa

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38. Look on me, O holy one, as I am,  
A poor sinner,  
Fear and sorrow, pain and regret  
Torture this poor heart.  
Look at me, laid bare before you,  
Master, the guiltiest in the world.  
Goethe, Erwin und Elmore, Goethe's Werke, vol. IV, p. 64.



and Valerio. He liked the idea of continuous singing, as the Italians did, and realized that the songs should be distributed among the actors in order that none should be over-worked. He noticed that to that end the Italians would make any sacrifices as to plot and continuity. In January, 1788, Goethe wrote to Herder: "Erwin und Elmire kommt mit diesem Brief; möge dir das Stückchen auch Vergnügen machen! Doch kann eine Operette, wenn sie gut ist, neimals im Lesen genug tun; es muss die Musik erst dazukommen, um den ganzen Begriff auszudrücken, den der Dichter sich vorstellte. 'Claudine' kommt bald nach. Beide Stücke sind mehr gearbeitet, als man ihnen ansieht, weil ich erst recht mit Kayser die Gestalt des Singspiels studiert habe." <sup>39</sup> Kayser's music was far from a fitting complement to the text. Reichardt also tried, but neither of them had the gift with which the possibilities of this sweet, light little story set to music might have been realized. It contains one little song which has outlived the rest, mainly because Mozart set it to music most beautifully. This is "Ein Veilchen Auf der Wiese stand." It has such extraordinary charm of movement, language, and sound that one is tempted to overlook the artificiality of its sentiment:

Ein Veilchen auf der Wiese stand

Gebückt in sich und unbekannt,

Es war ein herzigs Veilchen.

Da kam eine junge Schäferin

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39. "Erwin und Elmire comes with this letter; may this little piece give you some pleasure! However, the reading of an operetta can never be sufficient. It must first be set to music in order to express the whole conception, which the poet imagined. 'Claudine' will also come soon. Both pieces are much more worked over than it would seem, because I have studied the make-up of the Singspiel correctly for the first time with Kayser."

Goethe, Italienische Reise, Zweiter Band, Goethe's Werke, vol. XXI, Rome, January 10, 1788, p. 183.



Mit leichtem Schriet und muntern Suin  
 Daher, daher  
 Die Wiese her, und sang

Ach, denkt das Veilchen, wär ich nur  
 Die schönste Blume der Natur,  
 Ach nur ein kleines Veilchen,  
 Bis mich das Liebchen abgepflückt  
 Und an dem Busen nett gedrückt!  
 Ach nur, ach nur  
 Ein Viertelstundchen lang!

Ach! aber ach! das Mädchen kam  
 Und nicht in acht das Veilchen nahm,  
 Erteet das arme Veilchen.  
 Es senk und starb und frent'sich noch.  
 Und sterb' ich denn, so sterb' ich doch  
 Durch sie, durch sie,  
 40  
 Zu ihren Füßen doch.

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40. A violet in a meadow stood  
 Bent and unnoticed,  
 It was a darling violet.  
 There came a young shepherdess  
 With light step and blithe spirit  
 Down, down  
 Through the meadow, and sang.  
 Oh, thinks the violet, would that I were  
 The most beautiful flower of nature  
 Oh for only a little while  
 Until the lovely one plucked me,  
 And pressed me close to her bosom!  
 Oh, if only, if only  
 For a quarter of an hour.  
 But, oh, the maiden came  
 And paying no heed to the little violet  
 Stepped on the poor flower,



Claudine von Villa Bella has had somewhat the same career as Erwin und Elmire. It appeared first in 1775, being definitely inspired by Lili, and it was revised with Kayser in Italy in 1788. In the center of the play stands Claudine like a goddess, yet with the childlike manner of Lili. The play is based upon an incident which Goethe tells about in Book XVII of Dichtung und Wahrheit. July 23, 1775, Goethe says, <sup>41</sup> was Lili's birthday, for which an elaborate celebration was being planned. She was to arrive at Offenbach at noon of the appointed day, but something detained her. (It was probably her family's opposition to her intimacy with Goethe.) She sent a message by her brother the previous night to the effect that she would be late. Goethe, instead of being terribly disappointed, decided to write an occasional poem entitled:

"Sie kommt nicht!

Ein jammervolles Familienstück, welche, geklagt sei es Gott! den 23 Juni, 1775, in Offenbach am Main auf das allernatürlichste wird aufgeführt werden. Die Handlung danert vom Morgen bis auf'n Abend."<sup>42.</sup>

The poem told of the elaborate preparations being made for her arrival and the excitement of family and friends over her coming. As the title implied, she did not arrive and all preparations had been made in vain. The whole episode is humorously and entertain-

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It sank and died and rejoiced  
Saying: Then I die, so I die  
Through her, through her,  
At her very feet.

Goethe, op. cit., p. 40, Erwin und Elmire

41. On that date Goethe was in Italy. Therefore it must have been an earlier celebration that they had planned.

42. "She is not Coming!

"A Mournful Family Piece, which, may this my sorrow be brought before God ( ), will be represented in the most natural manner on the 23 of June, 1775, at Offenbach-on-the-Main. The action lasts from morning until evening."  
Goethe, Dichtung und Wahrheit, Bk. XVII, p. 51, in Goethe's Werke vol. XX, D.N.L. series.





ingly told by Goethe, and it is significant here, for Claudine von Villa Bella is based on it. When the curtain rises on the Singspiel the servants and children are bustling about in preparation for the elaborate feast which the father is giving in celebration of Claudine's arrival. Goethe has expressed his dual personality in two distinct characters, Don Pedro and Crugantino (in the second edition, Rugantino). In the first draft, the brothers were rivals for the hand of Claudine, but the solution was too difficult, for one of the brothers had to lose in the end, and that was not exactly consistent with a comedy. Therefore, in the second draft, Goethe eliminated the jealous nieces whom he had had before and created Lucinda who was still a niece, but sincerely devoted to Claudine and who furnished another heroine for the brothers. Lucinda, therefore, was in love with Rugantino, who represented Goethe's more unruly and romantic nature, and Claudine loved Pedro, who represented his more conventional nature. Therefore, everything resolves in the end in a splendid harmony. This story is no powerful literary creation, but it gives wonderful possibilities for a music setting. In the third act, when the two pairs of lovers are united and all the problems solved, everyone is happy. His stage directions read:

"Die ganze Entwicklung, welche die Poesie nur kurz andeuten darf und die Musik weiter ausführt, wird durch das Spiel der Akteure erst lebendig. Alonzos Erstaunen, und wie er nach und nach, von den Umständen unterrichtet, sich fasst, erst von Verwundrung zu Verwundrung, endlich zur Ruhe übergeht, die Zärtlichkeit Pedros und Claudinens, die lebhaftere Leidenschaft Carlos' und Lucindens, welche sich nicht mehr zurückhält, die Gebärden Pedros, der seinen Bruder dem Alonzo vorstellt, der Verdruss Baskos, nicht von der Stelle zu dürfen: alles werden die Schauspieler lebhaft, angemessen und übereinstimmend ausdrücken und durch eine studierte Pantomime den



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Musikalischen Vortrag beleben." Goethe made the whole play, and particularly this scene, dependent for its success on music that was worthwhile.

Although he hoped to write better texts than were usually written for Singspiele, he realized for the first time in Italy that he must write with the composer and singers more in mind. He had been studying the Italians and their music for some time. In 1784, he had the opportunity of hearing the Bellomöschchen society perform twelve Italian operas in German translation. When he finally went to Italy, he became quite enthusiastic over the Opera Buffa. He felt that every movement of the Italians had melody and rhythm. He had inherited from his mother enough music within himself to be able to recognize it in others. But he also recognized in Italian opera the exaggerated emphasis placed on the singer, at great expense to the form and content of the text. Therefore, he wanted to compromise between the text and music by bettering the texts without lessening the charm of the music. It was with this desire in mind, then, that he set about to rewrite Erwin and Claudine. He removed all prose dialogue and made his text a series of poems which in order to be appreciated had to be sung. In Claudine, he further unified the music and the story by just such scenes as that men-

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43. The whole development, which poetry can indicate only partially and which music enlarges, comes alive for the first time now through the play of the actors: Alonzo's astonishment and then his gradually getting control of himself, after being informed of the circumstances by one shock after another and his finally becoming calm; the tenderness of Pedro and Claudine; the still stronger passion of Carlos and Lucinda, which can restrain itself no longer; the gestures of Pedro, who presents his brother Alonzo; Bosko's displeasure at not being allowed to change his position. The actors will express all this with animation, measured and in harmony, and through this studied pantomime, they will enliven the musical exposition. Goethe, Claudine von Villa Bella, Goethe's Werke, vol. VII., p. 199.



tioned above in which the instrumental music served as a background for the action.

Reichardt wrote the music for Claudine later, for in 1829 Eckermann and Goethe discuss the plans for a performance of it. Eckermann asks by whom the opera is composed and what the music is like. "By Reichardt, and it is excellent," answered Goethe, "only, the instrumentation is a little too weak, owing to the taste of the time. Something should now be done in this respect,<sup>44</sup> so as to make the instrumentation a little stronger and fuller."

The first draft of Lila was completed in 1777, but it was not printed until 1790, after it had been re-worked. It was originally intended to be produced on January 30, 1775, in Weimar for the celebration of Duchess Louisa's birthday. There is no real proof as to the source of the story. There is some evidence that it was based on a tragi-comedy, L'Hypochondriac, by Jean de Rotrou (1609-1650), a short summary of which appeared in the Bibliothèque du Theatre Français depuis son origine which was in Dresden.<sup>45</sup> The part of the story which is like Goethe's is as follows: A page comes with a love letter from the beautiful Persida to Cloridan. But the seductive Cleonice makes him change the message to say that Persida is dead. Upon hearing the news, Cloridan goes mad and when he comes to himself, he thinks he is dead. The messenger goes back to Persida and tells her of Cloridan's condition. Persida hastens to the side of her beloved and attempts to bring him back to reality. She joins his other friends who bring before him many people who, they say,

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44. Goethe, Conversations with Eckermann, Wednesday, April 8, 1829, p. 396.

45. K. J. Schröer, Introduction to Lila in Goethe's Werke, vol. VII, p. 204.



were taken for dead, but have been brought back to life by music. Finally, he believes himself to have been brought back from death and hastens to embrace his beloved.

This motive appealed to Goethe, for he wanted to accomplish something by it in regard to the Duke Karl August. and the Duchess Luisa. He had discussed with Frau von Stein the frequent discords between the Duke and Duchess and hoped by this little piece to do something toward making them an ideal married couple. It is Goethe's purpose to convey by this good will and truth, which we may see in the dedication:

"An Herzogin Luise

Was wir vermögen

Bringen wir

An dem geliebten Tage dir

Entgegen.

Du fühlst, dass bei dem Unvermögen,

Und unter der Zaubermummerei

Doch guter Wille und Wahrheit sei."<sup>46</sup>

The play opens when the Duke receives the false report of his wife's death, and thereupon goes mad. Lila (the Duchess) finds that he has gone mad over her supposed death, and immediately there is awakened in her a strong love which she shows for him and changes his opinion that she was cold and incapable of deep affection. However, he thinks that all this love is being showered on him in the kingdom of death

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46. To Duchess Louisa.

What we can do

We bring

On this beloved day to you.

You feel that along with its feebleness

And under the mask of magic

There is, nevertheless, good will and truth.

J. W. Goethe, Lila, in Goethe's Werke, vol. VII, p.204.





(Totenreich), and there still remains the task of making him realize he is not dead. All the court tries to help them, particularly the magician, (Goethe). They tell him she is not dead, but only in the hands of evil spirits from which he must free her. Her deliverance and his mental restoration are finally brought about through music, and all are happy.

In the second version, Lila is the one who receives the letter and suffers consequently. That makes it better, because there is more opportunity for tenderness when a woman suffers. Goethe makes use of a chorus, fairies, magic, dancing and many supernaturalistic effects in order to create a mask for the situation he is representing. Lila has much prose throughout in its final version, but it is more musical prose than was found in the first version of Erwin and Claudine. Herr von Seckendorff, who is one of the least conspicuous musicians who are even mentioned in music history, composed the music for it. The story, the form, and the feeling behind it are just the kind which Schubert should have set to music. A criticism by Ferdinand Hiller is quoted in the Introduction to Lila which bears repetition here: "Seiner ganzen Anlage und teilweise seiner Ausführung nach, ist es aber eine achte oper. Wären die musikalischen Mittel dort (in Weimar) reicher gewesen, hätte der Dichter statt eines unvermögenden Dilettanten (des Herrn von Seckendorf) einen halbwegs ebenbürtigen Komponisten zur Stelle gehabt, ein Werk hätte<sup>47</sup> entstehen müssen, das noch in unsere Zeit hineinleuchtete." Of all

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47. "According to his whole plan and in part of its execution, it is really an opera. Had the musical resources there in Weimar been richer, had the poet instead of an incapable dilettante (Herr von Seckendorf) had a composer halfway equal to the task on the spot, a work would have originated which still in our time could be brilliant." Goethe, Lila, vol. VII, Introduction, p. 209, (Hiller quoted).



the songs in Lila there is one which is particularly significant. Schütze has chosen to put it in his collection of Goethe's best poems. Its significance lies in the fact that "it expresses a spirited defiance of the forces of cautious mediocrity and mean prudence, from which Goethe suffered much in his early years in Weimar." <sup>48</sup> It follows these words of the Magus: "Erniedre nicht deinen Willen unter dein Vermögen."

"Feiger Gedanken  
Bägliches Schwanken,  
Weibisches Zagen  
Angstliches Klagen  
Wendet kein Elend,  
Macht dich nicht frei.  
Allen Gewalten  
Zum Trutz sich erhalten,  
Nimmer sich bengen,  
Kräftig sich zeigen  
Rufet die Arme  
Der Götter herbei." <sup>49</sup>

Since it was not until Goethe's Italian trip in 1788 that he really came to understand the meaning of the Italian Opera Buffa, the second version of Lila, Claudine and Erwin are a step further

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48. Schütze, Martin, Goethe's Poems, Ginn and Company, Boston, 1916, Notes, p. 207.

49. Magus: "Do not lower your will beneath your capability."  
Cowardly thoughts, anxious misgivings,  
Womanly fears and fretful complaints  
Relieve you of no misery and do not set you free.  
To hold yourself firm in spite of temptations;  
To appear strong and never to be swayed,  
Calls for the aid of the Gods."

Goethe, Lila, Goethe's Werke, vol. VII, pp. 226-7.



than Jery und Bätely, which was begun during a trip to Switzerland in 1779. On December 29 of that year, Goethe wrote to Kayser sending him the opera text, and with it some explanation of his musical intentions. He first defines the three kinds of music that he wants:

1-Folk songs, which the actor might know by heart and use where he saw fit. They must be striking and impressive melodies.

2-Arias, to express what the particular character feels at the moment. It must come from the bottom of the heart, and be simple, true, and pure.

3-Rhythmical Dialogue. This should give the whole thing movement, and can be used either for declamation or for roving melody to speed up the play. The composer must keep the position, and action of the various actors constantly in his mind so that the requirements for one person at a given time will not be too difficult. If Kayser was so fortunate as to find a central theme, said Goethe, then let him vary it by major and minor modes, restrained or more vigorous tempos, etc., so as to give different coloring to the various situations. "Der Dialog muss wie ein glatter goldner Ring sein, auf den die Arien und Lieder wie Edelsteine aufsitzen."<sup>50</sup>

Goethe evidently had some misgivings as to how well Kayser could catch the spirit of what he wanted. Several weeks later, he wrote again urging him to study the play thoroughly before beginning to compose; to arrange the melodies and arias so that everything would work into a complete whole. "Das Accompagnement rate ich

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50. "The dialogue must be like a polished gold ring upon which the arias and songs rest like precious stones." Goethe's Werke, vol. VII. Introduction to Jery und Bätely, quoted from Goethe's letter to Kayser, Dec. 29, 1779.



Ihnen sehr mässig zu halten, nur in der Mässigkeit ist der Reichtum, wer seine Sache versteht, thut mit zwei Violinen, Viola und Bass mehr, als andere mit der ganzen Instrumentenkammer. Bedienen Sie sich der blasenden Instrumente als eines Gewürzes und einzeln; bei der Stelle die Flöten, bei einer die Fagot, dort Hautbo (Hautbois), das bestimmt den Ausdruck und man weiss, was man geniesst, anstatt dass die meisten neuern Komponisten wie die Köche bei den Speisen einen Hautgout von allerlei Anbringen, darüber Fisch wie Fleisch und das Gesoltene wie das Gebratene schmeckt."<sup>51</sup>

The letters giving to Keyser his idea for the music for the play also contains a unique expression of Goethe's feeling about Romantic music. In the second letter, we get one of our first glimpses at his idea of modern music. It is very typical of Goethe to advise moderation. In spite of all this advice, Kayser was unequal to the task. Herr von Seckendorff's was the only music which was at all acceptable, and that was very poor. It is a simple operetta in which the characters wear Swiss clothes and speak of milk and cheese. Its purpose is to give an idyllic description of Swiss life by means of theatrical and musical effects. Music has been written for it by at least seven very obscure composers. The most successful was the work of a Frenchman by the name of Adam, who made of it a charming opera called "Le Chalet." The play itself found a certain

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51. The accompaniment I advise you to keep very moderate, for only in moderation is there richness. He who understands his task does more with two violins, a viola, and a bass than others with a whole room of instruments. Use the wind instruments as a seasoning, and also by themselves. In this spot the flutes; here the bassoons, and there the oboes. This determines the expression and one knows what one is enjoying instead of the way it is with our more modern composers. They give to the food a high taste of all sorts of things so that the fish taste like meat and the broiled tastes like the baked.  
Ibid, p. 248-9. Letter to Keyser from Weimar, Jan. 20, 1780.





popularity in Weimar, in spite of Goethe's inability to find a composer.

Die Fischerin is probably the most important of all Goethe's Singspiele. In 1778, Goethe published his Gespräche über Rembrandt, in which he expressed a desire to have a garden festival with the wonderful illumination of a Rembrandt picture. On July 28, 1782, in the park at Tiefurt-an-der-Ilm Die Fischerin was performed in order to have the desired illumination enlivened by folk music. Herder had awakened in Goethe a love for the poetry of the people. Goethe studied the peasant folk to learn their wisdom and limitations, their humor and simplicity, and their superstitions. He really wanted to make these five traits visible to everyone in order that they, like him, might see their beauty. It is only in one other work that so great an effort is made and that is in Götz von Berlichingen.

In Die Fischerin, the characters dress simply and naturally; they sing folk songs which have a real part in the play; and they are upholders of the natural life as opposed to the artificial life. Goethe felt that the fundamental spirit of the German nation, which had in it elements of the fantastic and the imaginative, was to be found in the lives and music of the humble folk.

Not all of the songs in the play are completely German, but are Wendisch, songs of a hardy and silent peasant peoples living in a district which is now a part of Germany, and also Litanisch, songs of a district near Polish corridor. This was not a bad error because there is so much likeness in folksongs of all the Arian race. However, he would hardly have made the mistake if he had been familiar with Brentano's, Arnim's and Uhland's collections of German folk-music.



Dortchen, the heroine, has all the naiveté, charm, and magic power of many of the women whom Goethe loved, but retains all the freshness of peasant simplicity. Her father and lover are concerned solely with her welfare, and the concentration is doubled by the neighbor's attention to her. Corona Schröter undoubtedly took the part of Dortchen. She also wrote the first version of *Der Erlkönig*, the most famous poem of the play and one of Goethe's greatest at any time.

In the climax of the play, the whole scene is suddenly flooded with light, made by lanterns, torches, fires, etc., giving the appearance of fairy land in the full glory of illumination, after the manner of Rembrandt.

The last complete text for Singspiel that Goethe wrote was in 1784. This was Scherz, List und Rache, which was completed soon after he had been seeing the *Intermezzi* which Anton Berger and his wife were putting on in 1784. He had many of the same ideas for this as he had later in 1788 when revising Erwin and Claudine, but this was to be an exact imitation of the Opera Buffa. There are only three characters: Scapin, Scapina, and the Doctor. It is a very light and amusing story of the marital relations of Scapin and Scapina and their shy tricks played on the Doctor. Since the play is typically Italian, its music should have been composed by Cimarosa or Rossini. There is an opportunity for constant melody, but since all the burden is put on three actors, and it has little feeling and emotion, it would not appeal to German audiences. The French and Spanish might find great joy in something of that type.

Kayser composed the music for a part of it, but it was not successful. Goethe planned to take it to Munich in order to help Kayser. He later sent the overture and first act to Zelster in the



hope that he might be interested. Goethe realized its weaknesses and for a time he considered bringing to life the Doctor's bottles and making a chorus out of them.

Two fragments remain as yet unmentioned. They are Die Ungleichen Hausgenossen, which Goethe planned to let Kayser compose and present at Munich in case Scherz, Lizt und Rache failed; and the second part to Mozart's Zauberflöte. Die Ungleichen Hausgenossen was originally to be a story of seven people who were all thrown together in a castle and none of whom were congenial. The plot was to work so that in the end all the guests would be congenial. Many of them were represent Goethe's friends at court.

There is something very pathetic about the poet of Faust spending his time in writing Singspiele. They would have been much better than many of the more popular ones if he had found better composers, but there was no one with whom he would have liked to work except Mozart. Weimar was totally inadequate in its supply of composers; and after Entführung Aus dem Serail appeared, Goethe knew that anything he could have hoped to do toward the development of a real German Singspiel had been outdone by Mozart, although the text of Entführung was very poor. But it must be borne in mind that Goethe wrote these Singspiele as a relaxation from his more serious works. The playful and fun-loving aspect of Goethe's nature found its expression in them. But there were times when his noble spirit crept into them in spite of himself. They are filled with periodic outbursts of real lyric beauty, and some of his ideas on music foreshadow Wagner's lyric dramas and even Debussy's impressionism.

There is another work of Goethe's of which music was a very necessary part and that was his one and only melodrama, Proserpina.



This had its first and last appearance in Germany on February 3, 1815. Eberwein was the composer. It was a story of Proserpina's seduction into Hell by Pluto. After pleading with Zeus to let her return to Earth, and finally being allowed to return, she is overcome with the desire for a pomegranate, which she sees, and upon picking it, she is cast into the world of Orkus forever. She then has to submit to relentless fate, and the drama ends with Proserpina's standing in the midst of the huge scene of the world which must be hers forever. The background breaks out into a huge artistic tableau as she takes her place on the throne as queen and wife of Pluto. The choir of Fates enters singing and the whole play resolves into a symphony of drama, art, and music. Goethe wrote down his ideas for the presentation of this effective drama. He described at length what the scenery and costumes should be, how the actors should speak, and finally what part the music should play:

"Nunmehr ist es Zeit der Musik zu gedenken, welche hier ganz eigentlich als der See anzusehen ist, worauf jener künstlerisch ausgeschmückte Nachen getragen wird, als die günstige Luft, welche die Segel gelind, aber genugsam erfüllt und der steuernden Schiff-<sup>52</sup>erin bei allen Bewegungen nach jeder Richtung willig gehorcht."

There were innumerable instances of Goethe's planning huge orchestral and choral works, but each time it was the same story. The composer on hand could not carry out the poet's conception. As late as 1816, he formed the great project of an oratorio which

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52. "Now is the time to think of the music, which here must be considered quite decidedly as a lake upon which the artistically decorated boat is carried; as the breeze which fills the sails gently, but sufficiently and willingly obeys the maiden steering in all her motions in every direction."  
Goethe, Proserpina, in Aufsätze über bildende Kunst Theater, Goethe's Werke, XXX, p. 786.





would stand side by side with Handel's Messiah. Zelter was to write the music, and it was to be given at the jubilee of the Reformation. But this was also hopeless.

For twenty-six years of his life, Goethe had an almost unbelievable task. This was the directorship of a provincial theater in Weimar, where not only plays, but opera were given. This was his position from May 1791, to April 1817. Just before his arrival in Weimar, in 1774, the auditorium of the theater had burned out, the company had disbanded, and a fresh start had to be made. We could not imagine a man of his genius undertaking a thing of this kind if we had not already seen that his interest was not confined to what he himself wrote. And then, too, Goethe always liked to write his dramatic works with a view to the actors who would play the parts and the audience which would witness them. He took the work very seriously up until 1808. After that time, his interest waned due to the perpetual quarrels incited by the prima-donna, Karolina Jagemann, who was the recognized mistress of the duke, and used her position to impose her will on the management of the theater.

During the long period of his direction, six hundred pieces were performed and of that number one hundred and four were operas and thirty-one Singspiele. In 1795, when Goethe summed up the work of the theater during its first ten years, he found that not one work had been given more than twelve performances, except The Magic Flute, with twenty-two, and Il Seraglio, with twenty-five. Twenty years later, the total number of performances of Mozart's operas under Goethe's direction were eighty-two of the Magic Flute, sixty-eight of Don Juan, forty-nine of Il Seraglio, thirty-three of Così fan Tutte, twenty-eight of Titus, and nineteen of The



Marriage of Figaro. It is rather strange that the opera which was least successful in Weimar then has had the greatest popularity up to the present time. Schiller's dramas proved the only menace to Mozart's popularity, but after Schiller's death, opera again outweighed drama. Goethe's best pieces, Faust, Tasso, Iphigenie, Götz von Berlichingen, were only presented long after they were written and on very rare occasions. His Singspiele were given far more frequently, and even then the most popular, Jery und Bätely, was given only twenty-four times. Mozart, therefore, had un-  
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contestable supremacy in this theater.

Schiller once expressed in a letter to Goethe the great hopes he had founded on opera. He was of the opinion that just as tragedy was once evolved from the choruses of the ancient feasts of Bacchus, it would emerge from opera, but in a nobler form, because opera was free from the slavish imitation of nature, and in it art had "free play." Goethe replied: "You could have seen your expectation of the future of opera realized to a high degree in Don Juan. But this work remains unique, and with Mozart's death all hope of hearing  
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anything like it is lost."

Toward the end of his life, Goethe was in the midst of a theological discussion. He said that many people felt that God had created us and then had forgotten us; that in religious and moral matters some influence was still allowed, but people believed accomplishments in matters of science and art to be nothing but the product of human power.

Then he bursts out: "Let any one only try, with human will

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53. The information about the theater was obtained largely from Romain Rolland, Goethe and Beethoven, op. cit. p. 109-10.

54. Ibid., p. 111.



and human power, to produce something which may be compared with the creations that bear the name of Mozart, Raphael, or Shakespeare. I know very well that these three noble beings are not the only ones, and that in every province of art innumerable excellent geniuses have operated, who have produced things as perfectly good as those just mentioned. But if they were as great as those, they rose above ordinary human nature, and in the same proportion were as divinely endowed as they."<sup>55.</sup>

Sometime before that, in 1829, Goethe was thinking of the proper composer for his Faust music. He said: "The awful and repulsive passages which must occasionally occur, are not in the style of the time. The music should be like that of Don Juan. Mozart should have composed for Faust!" "Weakness," he said, "is a characteristic of our age. My hypothesis is, that it is a consequence of the efforts made in Germany to get rid of the French. Painters, natural philosophers, sculptors, musicians, poets, with but few exceptions, are all weak, and the general mass is no better."<sup>56.</sup>

This was a wise and a natural conclusion for a man like Goethe to reach. This weak age, to which he refers, was Romanticism. Goethe himself was a strange mixture of the Romantic and the Classic. He was at once subjective and objective, conventional and natural, restrained and highly emotional. He stood as a bridge between the two periods in literature, just as Beethoven did in music. His Romantic traits were held back from extremes by dignity, reserve and respect for form. Even his most subjective

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55. Goethe, Conversations with Eckermann, p. 569, Sun. March 11, 1832.

56. Ibid., p. 365, Thurs. Feb. 12, 1829.

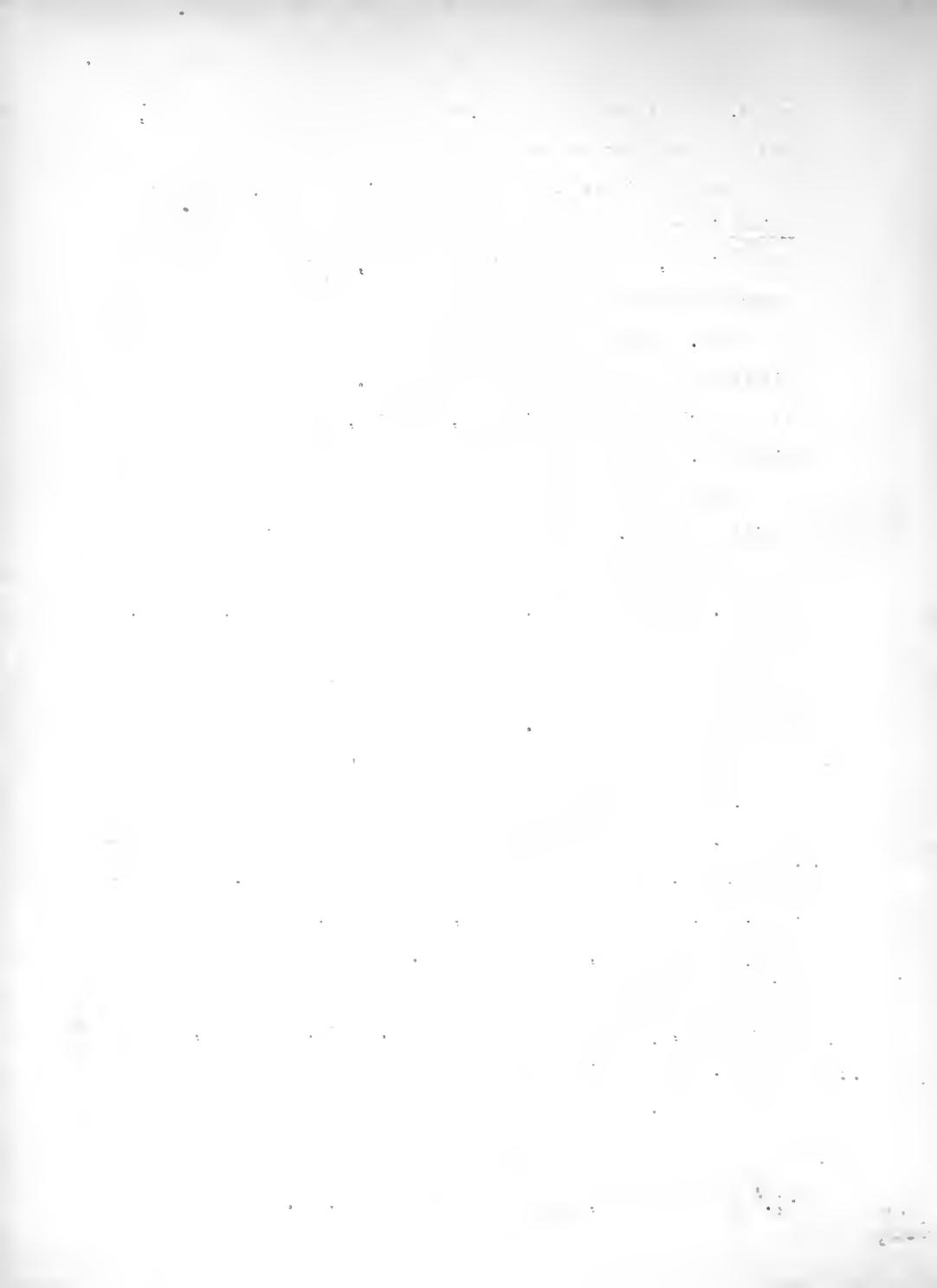


works, of which there are many, can be appreciated objectively, and only those who are acquainted with the life and thoughts of the poet know that it is of himself that he is speaking. Werther's Leiden is one of the most completely romantic works that have ever been written, and after reading that work, it is hard for us to understand some of the feelings that Goethe had towards romanticism in others. Rolland says that Goethe may have had an aversion for his time just as many of us have for ours. Both his and ours emerged from a World War after which art, religion, and reasoning had been distorted. People have scarcely known what they believed and there has existed a frantic state of readjustment full of failures and disillusionments. Both the French Revolution and its resulting wars and the modern World War caused a complete upset to the routine of life. In both periods, it has been an epoch "which, perhaps, in spite of its basic incoherence and destructive fury, may be pregnant with greatness, a necessary transition from a dying world<sup>57</sup> to a world yet to be born."

We are far enough removed from Goethe's epoch to see its results, but our present epoch is too close to judge what may be its outcome. The world war which Goethe witnessed led to complete individualism, both as to nations and as to individuals. In literature, art, music, and philosophy, Romanticism, or the supremacy of Feeling over Reason, was its outcome. Young artists had to express what they themselves felt, and the louder they wept and the more they wailed, the more popular they were. This, of course, was the extreme, and Romanticism did not by any means always show itself through tears. But Goethe had struggled too hard to establish order

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57. Romain Rolland, Goethe and Beethoven, p. 29.





in his art and in his life not to be repelled by the course things were taking. One of his strongest outbursts was against Achim von Arnim in a letter to Reinhardt written in October, 1810. Arnim was a young gentleman of letters worthy of esteem for both his talent and his character and later to become the husband of Goethe's little friend, Bettina Brentano (see page 14).

"There are moments," Goethe writes, "when they drive me to distraction. I have to control myself so as not to be rude to Arnim, who sent me his Countess Dolores, which I like well. If had a son gone astray, I would rather that he wandered into brothels, and even pigsties, than that he should lose himself in the bedlam of the present day, for I fear that from this hell there is no salvation."<sup>58</sup>

He gave a very interesting definition of the terms 'classic' and 'romantic' to Eckermann once when discussing the modern French poets. "A new expression occurs to me," said Goethe, "which does not ill define the state of the case. I call the classic healthy, the romantic sickly. In this sense, the 'Nibelungenlied' is as classic as the 'Iliad,' for both are vigorous and healthy. Most modern productions are romantic, not because they are new, but because they are weak, morbid, and sickly; and the antique is classic, not because it is old, but because it is strong, fresh, joyous, and healthy."<sup>59</sup>

Before Goethe's views on the trends of music are considered, it will be necessary to understand from the standpoint of music history exactly what those trends were. The Romantic movement came later in music than in the other arts, both because music is less

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58. Ibid, p. 29.

59. Goethe, Conversations with Eckermann, Thurs., April 3, 1829, p. 380.



readily influenced by actualities and because the development of the sonata form and the symphony, with which Classic musicians concerned themselves chiefly, had to reach a certain point before the liberty of abandoning them could be taken.

The father of the sonata form and German classicism was a Frenchman, Jean Philippe Rameau. His place in the history of music is somewhat analogous to that of René Descartes in the history of philosophic thought. "In exactly the same way that Descartes sought to substitute a balanced, logical, and reasoned system of thought in which all the constituent propositions are closely related and interdependent as in the books of Euclid, for an undisciplined conglomerate of scientific opinions and religious prejudices; so Rameau aimed at the supersession of the largely empirical and unsystematized technique of the Baroque composers by a severely logical, coordinated, cut-and-dried system of harmony."<sup>60</sup> It was his theory rather than his practice which inspired his German followers, Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach, Haydn and Mozart, for his reliance on calculation and reflection instead of artistic instinct robbed his compositions of all spontaneity and charm.

The first composer of note to put his ideas of logic in music into practice was Bach, son of the great Johann Sebastian Bach. He by no means had the genius of his father; his works cannot even be considered in the same category. In much of his music there are long stretches of the most superficial, conventional and uninteresting passages. However, he was the first to make each movement of his sonatas an organic whole rather than a pattern of unrelated subjects. He saw more possibilities in Ternary form than in Binary form,

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60. Cecil Gray, The History of Music, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1928, p. 160.



the latter of which even his father favored. The framework of the sonata form as he established it consisted of three parts: an exposition, a development section, and a recapitulation. Key changes and variations could take place in the development section, but the music should return to the original key in the recapitulation. In his own execution of these and other regulations, he was often unpolished, abrupt, and even crude, but he should be regarded as "one of those artists, common in periods of transition, who suggest more to others than they are themselves capable of realizing, and who often make discoveries and innovations, the possibilities of which they are themselves completely unaware."<sup>61</sup>

Haydn marks the transition between the immature, but prophetic forms of C. P. E. Bach and the complete maturity of the sonata. He profited by the experiments of others as well as his own, and was therefore able to catch the exact principle of proper balance between its sections. He made the transitional passages have more meaning; to the second theme he gave more individuality and independence; and he made the coda longer and more definite as a coda. Haydn's success lay in his ability to think clearly, to systematize and to organize, all of which was necessary in the progress of the cyclic sonata form, but along with his merits came the defects of monotony, angularity, and cut-and-dried precision.

Mozart was somewhat younger than Haydn and was much shorter-lived, but he was able to profit by both Haydn's accomplishments and his limitations. He was able to carry the same sort of organization into a higher stage, combining with the unity of the whole a much greater diversity in the parts. His themes are longer and more

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61. Ibid, p. 163.



complex, he is more venturesome in his harmonies, his rhythms have more variety, he has more fluent and inevitable development sections, more graceful modulations and is more subtle in all his means of expression than Haydn. In these ways, he refined and polished the sonata and the symphony until it had reached its highest possible stage of development without disregarding any part of the Classic formula. It might be that if Mozart had lived longer, he would have done even that; for it was in the nature of the times to break rules, but once the restrictions were removed, music changed from objective to subjective, and Mozart as a composer was thoroughly impersonal. Not once in all his music, operas, symphonies, concerti, or any other of his works does he give the slightest intimation of the agony and torture which he endured during his life-time. Instead, it is always gay and courtly. "There is an aloofness, a detachment, a rarefied purity about his music, that makes it difficult to describe in terms of human feeling."<sup>62</sup>

Beethoven, living during the same era as Mozart, but for a longer time, was the first great musician to break the bonds of objectivity in music. In his works one finds a perfect balance between objectivity and subjectivity. He respected form, but he did not allow the expression of his musical "idea" to be thwarted on account of it. Mozart had no other purpose in composing than to delight and charm by the smooth, polished and graceful combinations of notes. Beethoven was not satisfied to stop there. His music is not merely the product of a sensitive ear, but it is also the expression of a profound soul which would speak only through music.

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62. Daniel Gregory Mason, Beethoven and His Forerunners, MacMillan Co., New York, 1922, P. 248.





From the very first of his career, Beethoven gave the forms of the sonata and symphony a new meaning. Many think that the change was not evident until a later period of his life, but even in his first two symphonies, "obviously modelled as they are in the forms and idioms made common property by his forerunners, there is a virility, a profundity, an intensity of spiritual ardor, for which we look in vain in Haydn and Mozart." <sup>63</sup> What he expressed was not the particulars of his own personal emotions, nor was it the details of what he saw or experienced, both of which his followers did to the detriment of their music, but it was the underlying and universal mood or emotion which accompanies the actual experiences of every human being. In his Eroica Symphony, which he dedicated to Napoleon in 1803, <sup>64</sup> he meant to portray the particular personality of Napoleon, but before many bars had been written, his music had passed from the realm of one particular hero into that of universal heroism and grandeur. It was the "idea" with which he was concerned and not the empirical experience.

Beethoven, in accord with the movement for freedom so widespread during his time, did much to free music and musicians from the shackles of convention. Beside proving that music was greater if allowed to stray from the path of set form and key relations, he enlarged the possibilities of the orchestra, giving recognition to the bass instruments as solo voices; and, most of all, he dared to be different and express through his music the loftiest thoughts of his own soul. He also worked successfully without a patron, a thing which had never been done before, except by Mozart whose life was a

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63. Ibid, p. 248.

64. Later, when Napoleon declared himself emperor, Beethoven became angered because of his imperial ambitions, and struck his name from the dedicatory page.



complete failure materially. Despite these apparently revolutionary innovations, Beethoven always kept one foot near enough to the ground to be used when necessary. Also, he was mature enough when European politics were at their exciting climax not to be swept into the chaotic whirl of many who possessed less balance than he.

There were other composers starting out on their careers while Beethoven was still living who were overawed by the changing conditions in music and in the world in general. Following Beethoven's example, they worked without patrons. Many of them travelled about, going to Paris and mingling with people with different ideas and interesting themselves in other arts. Literature became the inspiration of the musician, and program music replaced absolute music almost entirely. A musician needed an outside stimulus, to serve in the capacity of an artist's model, in order to create. This stimulus might be in the form of a personal experience, a poem, a picture, a scene of nature, or anything which the musician could transcribe into music. The most outstanding composers in this period were Schubert, Berlioz, von Weber, Liszt, Schumann and Chopin. With them, in general, the symphonic poem replaced the symphony; piano pieces became expressive of personal emotion; the art-song replaced the folk-song. All forms of music were broadened to allow more personal feeling and more story-telling. Composers of orchestral works concentrated on the means of getting more coloristic effects to meet the histrionic demands made upon the instruments. For example, in the extreme of program music as is found in Strauss' Til Eulenspiegel, the instruments must narrate all the pranks of Til from his riding in the procession of priests and flirting with the ladies to his trial and execution. Just as every other phase of Romanticism in music, program music had its most concrete beginning



with Beethoven. When Beethoven called his Sixth Symphony The Pastoral Symphony, he did not mean that it would be a picture of rural life. To safeguard his work against any such interpretation he added a note to the effect that the symphony was more an expression of feeling than a painting. He was expressing the "idea" of the calmness and happiness of nature, rather than giving the particulars of a scene. This was program music of a kind, but the more radical Romanticists had soon reduced program music to giving more and more personalized and detailed impressions until with Strauss it became stark and empty realism.

Such was the course of music development during the latter part of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Goethe, living during the most significant part of this period (1749-1832) and being as interested in music as he was, could not have been blind to the transition from Classicism to Romanticism that was in progress during his maturity. What were his thoughts about it?

Mozart had been Goethe's ideal of musical perfection ever since that first concert which Goethe had heard in Frankfurt when he was fourteen and Mozart was only seven. His compositions fulfilled every requirement which Goethe had for music:- "to set free the joy of living, moral confidence, whole-hearted energy, and, above all, the impulse of reason."<sup>65</sup> Goethe's appreciation for Mozart grew steadily as Goethe became older. He often expressed the desire that Mozart might work with him, but he never made any actual attempt to bring about such a collaboration. Instead, he held fast to Kayser and Reichardt and pitied them that they had nothing better than his poems to set to music. It is doubtful as to how effective a collabo-

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65. Rolland, op. cit., p. 115.



ration between Goethe and Mozart would have been. The Singspiele and the more frivolous lyrics might have fared well with Mozartian accompaniment, but for Egmont, Faust and others of Goethe's larger works, a musician of more depth and greater emotion was needed. Beethoven was far closer to Goethe in spirit than Mozart, and he would have welcomed the opportunity to exchange ideas with the poet, but their meeting at Teplitz having been a failure (see page 13), no other opportunities presented themselves for their further acquaintance. Beethoven proud before everyone but Goethe, continued to have the same high regard for him and his works all his life through. In July 1822, he said: "Since that Carlsbad summer, I read something of Goethe's every day,--that is, when I read at all. No one so gives himself to composition as he. Only I am not fond of writing songs." <sup>66</sup> In spite of Goethe's lack of encouragement, Beethoven, in 1810, wrote the music for two lovely songs: Trocknet nicht Tränen and Kennst du das Land?. In that same year he wrote the Overture and incidental music for Egmont and since 1808 he had been planning to write the music for Faust. The plan had still not been carried out in 1822 when Rochlitz approached Beethoven with a commission from the firm of Breitkopf and Härtel for the incidental music for Faust. Beethoven was still enthusiastic and said to Rochlitz: "Ha! That <sup>67</sup> would be a task! That should be something worth doing!" But he was already at work on two symphonies and an oratorio, and his age and deafness would permit him to do no more. He was, therefore, forced to decline.

Unfortunately, Goethe did not receive Beethoven's music with as

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66. Istel, op. cit., p. 234.

67. Rolland, op. cit., p. 205.





much appreciation as Beethoven received Goethe's poetry. This was partly due to Zelter's pettiness and jealousy, since Zelter had such a large part in shaping Goethe's ideas on music. Bettine von Arnim suspected that Zelter was the cause of Goethe's apparent stubbornness in regard to Beethoven's music. In a letter to Goethe in 1810, she said: "In every art the magical raises in trivial minds a perplexity, which in music attains an undoing power; Zelter, for instance, admits of nothing he does not already understand, though music is only beginning where mental powers reach no more.....Strange fate of music-language not to be understood! Thence the rage against that which has not been heard before; thence the expression, 'unheard.' To genius in music the man of principle always stands opposite, like a block. (Zelter must avoid standing opposite to Beethoven.) With the known he agrees, not by understanding, but because he is accustomed, like the ass, to its daily way." This letter was a reproach to Goethe, as well as to Zelter, for, more deepseated than the influence which Zelter had on Goethe, was the poet's uneasiness over the change he saw taking place. To Goethe, Beethoven's music was chaos and confusion. He earnestly tried to understand it. He missed no opportunity to have Beethoven's compositions played in his home, and while he was director of the theatre, Beethoven's music for Egmont was performed in 1812 and again in 1814, and his Fidelio was given in 1816. However, there was never any closer understanding than there had been on that day when they walked out together and passed the Empress Louise (see page 13). Romain Rolland has summed up the situation in regard to Goethe's feelings about Beethoven thus: "Goethe was not enough of a musician to see in Beethoven what Bettina

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68. Goethe, Correspondence with a Child, Bettina to Goethe, pp. 329-30.



had cleverly divined, the sovereign mastery of his will in matters of art, over the unfettered elements. He was, however, musician enough.....to perceive the unchaining of these elements and to be frightened by it. The rushing of the flood was in his ears, but not the quos ego of deliverance. Beethoven's dominance of the elements, even had he realized it, would not perhaps have reassured him on his own account.....On the edge of any abyss, Goethe felt giddy. He considered Beethoven, gesticulating on the verge, as a lunatic, a sleep-walker who, sooner or later, would topple into the depths." <sup>69</sup>

If Goethe felt that strongly about Beethoven who was only moderately Romantic, there is little doubt as to what opinion he would have had concerning some of Beethoven's followers. Von Weber, whom Goethe knew, was one of his pet antipathies both because of von Weber's unattractive personality and because of the wildness of the orchestration in his compositions. It was particularly the din of the brasses and the clash of the percussion instruments to which Goethe objected. Von Weber was the victim of Goethe's dislike more than any other because he happened to be thrown with the poet more. But Goethe would have felt the same way about any of them. He was one of those great men who dislike in other arts most strongly just exactly the thing for which they stand in their own.

While Goethe was establishing the German Lied in literature, giving it sufficient freedom and spontaneity, musicians were establishing the Lied musically. But only once did Goethe acknowledge any possibilities in the songs. That was in a conversation with a friend, Christian Lobe, in April, 1820. In an effort to explain to Goethe that Zelter's accompaniments were antiquated in form, Lobe

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69. Rolland, op. cit., pp. 31-32.



played for illustration the accompaniments of several Zelter songs and several by Beethoven, including Klarchen's Lied from Egmont. His point was that, while Zelter's accompaniments by themselves were flat and uninteresting, the more modern composers gave to their accompaniments the same emotion as the song, so that at times it expressed a certain amount of feeling even without the melody. After some moments of reflection, Goethe said: "Good! the world does not stand still, after all, even if its progress sometimes upsets our habits and disconcerts us. Still, I will not conceal from you that your illustrations were not so convincing as I had expected from your new principle, which may, however, become valid if music is able to carry it into effect. But herein lies the danger for you of the younger generation! You are ready enough to set up new ideals--and how does it stand with their realization? Your theory that every part should say something, sounds very plausible; indeed, one would suppose that it should long since have been known to and put into practice by every composer, being a matter so readily apprehended." <sup>70</sup> Goethe's lyric ideal was rooted in the folk-song. His only desire was to have a melody conforming to the basic mood of the poem and supported by simple harmony. The singer should have no trouble then in adapting the several strophes. With this conception firmly in his mind, he rejected through-composition of any sort and looked upon any type of accompaniment except that which gave simple harmonic support as as parasitical overgrowth on the poetic words. Reichardt and Zelter supported him in this view. Goethe condemned Beethoven's setting of Mignon's song, Kennst du das Land?, thinking it was through-composed, when, as a matter of fact, strophic form had been maintained except

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70. Istel, op. cit., pp. 235-6.



for a slight variant in the third verse. The accompaniment, however, by its very completeness, encroached on the poet's property, in Goethe's mind, and he resented it.

The same thing that Beethoven was doing in a mild way was being done to a much greater extent by Franz Schubert. If Goethe failed to understand this change, it is very fortunate that the letter to Goethe enclosing songs which Schubert had written to the poet's words was completely overlooked. For Schubert's most important work was done in songs and had Goethe reacted unfavorably to his greatest efforts it might have been a disastrous disillusionment. For it was Goethe's poetry which had aroused Schubert to establish a new type of song. Once Goethe enclosed the following two lines with a group of poems that he sent to his beloved:

"Nur nicht lesen; immer singen  
Und ein jenes Blatt ist dein."<sup>71</sup>

Song-writers found Goethe's poems possessing so much music in their metres and in the words themselves that the simple folksong accompaniment was entirely too limiting. It was necessary to employ new means of accompaniment lest the poem be damaged by the music written for it.

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71. "Don't just read them; always sing them  
And then each leaf is yours."  
K. J. Schröer, Introduction to Singspiele, Goethe's Werke,  
vol. VII, p. VI.





## III

"The modern German tradition of great popular song, which began with Goethe, is the unique and supreme German achievement in literature."<sup>72</sup> If every other literary creation were removed from the Germans, they could still claim a high position in the field of literature. When we think of German lyric poetry we feel that it has been the home of song since its earliest beginnings anywhere. To a certain extent that is true, because Germany has a wealth of folksongs and ballads. However, it is amazing to realize that before Goethe, there had been only two makers of songs of the first rank. One was Christian Günther, who died in 1723 at the age of twenty-eight, and he was so far beyond the comprehension or appreciation of his contemporaries that he perished mainly from mental privation. The other poet who strove to release spontaneous feeling from the bondage of conventional ideas was Klopstock, who may be regarded as a forerunner of Goethe.

Goethe's first significant poetry was written in Leipzig in 1766-68, but considering the stage of young manhood through which he was passing at that time, it is not surprising to find those poems are now of historical value only. We remember that in 1770 Goethe went to Strassburg, and there he met Herder. Herder was the recog-

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72. Martin Schütze, Goethe as Lyrical Poet, in Goethe Centenary Papers, 1832-1932, Chicago, 1933, p. 160.



nized leader of the new literary movement. Against the neo-classic idea of worshipping universal and absolute Reason, Herder maintained that the real guiding principle was the same total of individual sensibility based on personal experience and feeling.

In the field of poetry, Herder developed from this central idea his theory of folksong. "Folk-song in his view is the type of song which embodies the authentic, emotional and imaginative, spontaneous experience, the total 'Gemütsleben,' which is fundamental to normal, sound, imaginative, and intelligent humanity, that is, to all persons not warped and desiccated by false and conventional training, specialization, preoccupation and self-absorption." <sup>73</sup> It mattered not to Herder by whom the songs were written, whether by one of high social position or a rustic. His ideal of a genius was one in whom feeling, reason, and imagination were an indissoluble whole. If this were the case, then masters would have a sane and normal outlook on life, rational and yet at the same time, not without sensibility and imagination.

These ideas he communicated to Goethe in 1770-71 when they were together in Strassburg. Herder's idea of the integral personality became Goethe's "motif" of life. Herder, older by five years than Goethe, released the younger man from the constraint of universal conventions. But the force of love was also needed before he could burst forth into lyric poetry. However, Goethe seemed to find no difficulty throughout his life in supplying that need; so that his friendship with Herder marks the beginning of his career as a poet.

His pre-Weimar poetry is simple, effortless, and spontaneous. Mr. Schütze says: "The chief characteristic common to all the greatest song of this period is that the sentiment, the imaginative ex-

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73. Ibid, p. 162.



perience, and the statement of each exclude everything except the indispensable substance, which remains after the elimination of all secondary qualification, ornament, and conscious appreciation or conscious emotionalization, both in the sentiment and in the statement." <sup>74</sup>  
 This does not mean that Goethe's poetry is not subjective, for it would be difficult to imagine objective lyric poetry. However, he does preserve a balance between form and feeling with the result that the artistic "idea" conveys the same poetic meaning to all persons who are sufficiently sensitive to read it intelligently. Mailed is a striking example of the meaning which Goethe can give in a very compact and direct style.

## 75

## Mailed

Wie herrlich leuchtet	Und Freud und Wonne
Mir die Natur!	Aus jeder Beust.
Wie glänzt die Sonne!	O Erd, O Sonne!
Wie lacht die Flur!	O Glück, O Lust!
 Es dringen Blüten	 O Lieb, O Liebe!
Aus jedem Zweig	So golden schön
Und tausend Stimmen	Wie Morgenwolken
Aus dem Gesträuch,	Auf jenem Höhn!

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74. Ibid, p. 168.

75. — How masterful Nature seems to me! How the sun shines! How the meadow smiles! Buds burst from every twig and a thousand voices from the thicket, and joy and delight from every breast. O earth, Oh, sun, Oh joy, Oh happiness! Oh beloved, O Love! as resplendent and beautiful as the morning clouds on yonder heights!



Du seguest herrlich  
 Das frische Feld,  
 Im Blütendamste  
 Die volle Welt.

So liebt die Lerche  
 Gesang und Luft,  
 Und Morgenblumen  
 Den Himmelsduft,

O Mädchen, Mädchen,  
 Wie lieb ich dich  
 Wie blickt dein Auge!  
 Wie liebst du mich!

Wie ich dich liebe  
 Mit warmen Blut  
 Die du mir Jugrud  
 Und Frend und Mut.

Zu neuern Liedern  
 Und Tanzen gibst,  
 Sei e ig glücklich  
 "Wie du nich liebst."

It is almost impossible to translate this little poem so that it has any meaning without spoiling the effect of the simplicity and unpretentiousness which Goethe has produced. He has chosen words which give the desired effect without any qualifying terms added. The sentences are as simple as they could be and still be sentences. The whole poem gives a perfect impression of spring and young love. Herder's influence can be seen here in the balance between the various aspects of the individual. Had Goethe been any more effusive about this new love, his poem would resemble some of Alfred de Musset's, in which the element of feeling outweighs reason,

Thou greatly charmest the fresh field, the whole world, in the perfume of blossoms.

Oh Maiden, Maiden, how I love thee. How thine eyes sparkle! How thou lovest me!

As the lark loves song and the breeze and the heavenly fragrance of morning flowers, so I love thee with warm passion which thou givest to me in youth, joy, and courage for new songs and dances. Be eternally happy, as you love me!  
 Goethe, *Mailed in Gedichte in Zeitlicher Folge*, Erster Band  
 Leipzig im Insel-Verlag, p. 90.





form, and even discretion!

When Goethe went to Weimar, another change took place. The only time he had ever bothered about social formality was during his affair with Lili. But now he was forced to adjust himself to life of a small court. Companion to the young duke, lover of Frau von Stein (one of the most intellectual ladies at court), and President of the Ducal Chambers, he naturally experienced some changes which are revealed in his poetry. The poems of the Weimar period are excellent, but they do not have the same spontaneity, freshness, and naturalness of the earlier poems. They are more refined in style and meter, more consciously created for a desired effect. Der Fischer and Der Erlkönig are splendid examples of this type. In both, there is created in the mind of the hearer a mysterious emotional preoccupation. In order to see the essential difference between the two periods of poetry, a new reading of Der Erlkönig and a comparison of the effect of this and the Mailied are necessary.

### Erlkönig

Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?

Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;

Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm,

Er fässt ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.

Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht?

Siehst, Vater, du den Erlkönig nicht?

Den Erlenkönig mit Kron und Schweif?

Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif.

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76. The name of Alfred de Musset is chosen to represent the extreme of Romanticism in lyric poetry. There are numbers of others who could be mentioned.

77. Goethe, Gedichte, p. 230.



"Du liebes Kind, komm, geh mit mir!  
 Gar schöne Spiele spiel ich mit dir:  
 Manch bunte Blumen sind an dem Strand,  
 Meine Mutter hat manch gülden Gewand."

Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörest du nicht,  
 Was Erlenkönig mir leise verspricht?--  
 Sei ruhig, bléibe ruhig, mein Kind;  
 In dürren Blättern säuselt der Wind.--

"Willst, feiner Knabe, du mit mir gehn?  
 Meine Tochter sollen dich werten schön;  
 Meine Tochter führen den nächtlichen Reihn,  
 Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein."

77.cont'd-Who rides so late through the night and the wind?  
 It is the father with his child;  
 He has the boy close in his arms  
 He holds him securely, he keeps him warm.

My son, why do you hide your face in such fear?--  
 Look, father, don't you see the Erlking near?  
 The Erlking with his crown and train?--  
 My son, it is a streak of mist.

"You dear child, come go with me!  
 Quite pretty games I'll play with thee;  
 Many gay-colored flowers are on the strand,  
 My mother has many garments of gold."

My Father, Father, and do you not hear,  
 What the Erlking softly promises me?--  
 Be quiet, be calm, my child;  
 It is the wind rustling the dry leaves.

"Fine boy, do you want to go with me?  
 My daughters will well take care of thee  
 My daughters their nightly revels will keep  
 And rock you and dance you and sing you to sleep."



Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort  
 Erlkönigs Tochter am düstern Ort?--  
 Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh es genau:  
 Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau.--

"Ich liebe dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt;  
 Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch ich Gewalt."  
 Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt fasst er mich an!  
 Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan!--

Dem Vater grauset, er reitet geschwind,  
 Er hält in Armen das achzende Kind,  
 Erreicht den Hof mit Müh und Not;  
 In seinen Armen das Kind war tot.

This poem is a masterpiece of dramatic effect, and yet it has little more in substance than the poems of the pre-Weimar period. The first and last stanzas are the only ones in which the story is not told by conversation. We get the conception in the calm, comforting words of the father, the bewildered, terrified cries of the son, and the gradual change of tone of the Erlking from invitation

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77.cont'd-Father, father, and don't you see there  
 The Erlking's daughter on the dark path?--  
 My son, my son, I see it exactly:  
 It is the old willows which look so gray.--

"I love you, I'm charmed by your beautiful form;  
 And since you're unwilling, I'll have to use force."  
 Father, O father, he is clutching me now!  
 The Erlking at last has done to me harm.

The father now rides with terror half wild  
 He holds in his arms the shuddering child,  
 He reaches the courtyard with terror and dread,  
 In his arms lies his little one, already dead.



to persuasion, and finally to employment of force. Suddenly, the conversation ends. The style of the first verse is resumed and the frame of the poem closes. It is powerful. Many of the poems of this period are hardly comparable to this one, but they show, as this does, extreme verbal and metrical skill; and they are necessarily not as spontaneous as the earlier ones, but they produce an emotional effect that the others lacked.

The Italian influence on Goethe's poetry was not very favorable. The free flow of his natural spontaneity was checked by his absorption in classical rhetoric and meter, and it took him almost ten years to return to anything like his natural manner. The "ballad year," 1797-98, was the first indication of his return to the old style. But these ballads have a tendency to be long, narrative, moralistic romances. Some of them are: Der Edelknabe und die Müllerin, Der Junggesell und der Mühlbach, and Der Müllerin Reue.

In 1813, Goethe wrote one of his most beautiful love songs, Gefunden, which he addressed to his wife, Christiane Vulpius.

During the Napoleonic wars, Goethe sought refuge in attempting to write oriental poetry. The West-östlicher Divan, which collection was the result, contains some very lovely poems, but it is impossible to suppose that a man, who was as great a master of the German language as was Goethe, could write as successful poetry in an alien idiom.

During the last period of his life, his poetic powers seemed newly inspired. The second part of Faust is filled with exquisite songs, and his love for the very young girl, Ulrike von Levetzow, inspired one of his most truly tragic lyrics, The Elegy.

At the same time that Goethe was establishing the modern German Lied poetically, there was one who was doing the same thing for the





German Lied musically. His name has been mentioned before, but he deserves more than a mere mention. That man was Franz Schubert (1797-1828). Up to the time when Schubert was recognized, instrumental music in Germany had been taking a place of prominence. Song is like poetry. It is impossible to be completely objective in it, and since the Classic age concentrated upon the laying down of rules and the following of them, the song was not particularly worthwhile, except as an unpretentious amusement, appropriate chiefly for vaudeville theatres. The real spirit of the song was preserved in the Singspiele. Since they were regarded as the lightest kind of entertainment, the music was that which would appeal most quickly to the hearts of the people. The song never ceased to be loved, but it was not respected.

The Singspiel folk-song type was the only kind to be used for settings of the words of all poets. In that way, no possible distinction could be made in good and bad poetry when it was set to music. "Zelter's settings of Goethe's poems were scarcely to be distinguished, in point of form, from the songs that were sung in the cheap theatres."<sup>78</sup> So much has been said of the mediocrity of the composers who worked hand in hand with Goethe on the Singspiele and on individual poems, that something might here be said in their defense. Kayser, Reichardt, Zelter, and even Eberwein were considered superior composers during their day. They wrote conventional music to Goethe's words, and he was often pleased with the results. However, they were not endowed with as great an amount of insight or genius as Schubert. C. P. E. Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven wrote songs of great beauty, but their main interest was not in this field.

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78. Art of Music, The Voice and Vocal Music, p. 191.



However, what they did was far more important to Schubert. With the store of technical materials and the expressive power, which Beethoven had given, Schubert had no trouble in giving to the art-song that freedom of form which has been a characteristic of it ever since. He was not the first to make use of the through-composed song, but he was the one who established it for all times.

First, then, in establishing the song as one of the great departments of music, he gave it freedom of form. Second, he gave to it great melodies. Instead of using the song as an outlet for second or third rate melodies and saving the best for nobler works, as those before him had done, Schubert gave to the song the very best of the riches of his artistic equipment. He proved that the writing of a perfect song was as worthy a task for a great artist as the writing of an oratorio, mass, or symphony. Third, he chose some of the greatest short poems of German literature for his settings, and fourth, he showed a marvelous sense of poetry in his music. If the music of Reichardt, Zelter, and the others is separated from the words it is pleasing, but entirely colorless. If one hears only the piano part of Schubert's songs, the feeling of the words is conveyed through the music alone. In Beethoven's later works, there is evident a violent conflict between form and expression, which to most people is the glory of them, but Schubert had none of that struggle. It had been done for him, and with him we find only the joyous spontaneity of the expression of the words.

"Schubert, then, with a marvelous fund of melody, a sense of poetic values in words and music, and a free instinct for expressive form, did for the song what Haydn had done for the symphony---put it on the musical map." He was able to do this, not only because he



was a great musician, but largely because there were great poets in Germany whose lyrics were available. Schubert's songs are classified for convenience in three periods--first, songs of the Sturm und Drang poetry; second, songs of the Romantic poetry; and third, songs of the "young German" poetry. The songs of the first period are of importance here, since the chief poet was Goethe.

Gretchen am Spinnrade was Schubert's first song on a poem of Goethe's. It was written October 19, 1814. Schubert had written thirty songs before it, but none of them had been as deserving of recognition as this. By this song alone, Schubert revealed a new thing in art--the modern realistic song. What was there in this poem to have inspired Schubert's first genuine and masterful outburst? This poem occurs in the first part of Faust, but it may easily be, and often is, considered as an individual lyric. It belongs to the pre-Weimar songs of Goethe. Schütze says of it: "The supreme anguish of love which contains the extremes of longing and dread, of triumphant terror, of heaviness of heart and exaltation, of desolation and exuberance, of confusion of mind and clearest recognition of one overmastering impulse, speaks in a language almost bare of qualification and ornament, and abrupt in its transitions; in a meter impetuous as that of Mailed, yet with a tragic movement wholly different; and in the repetitions of the first stanza which produce the sympathetic effect of a refrain."<sup>80</sup>

Gretchen am Spinnrade

Meine Ruh ist hin,

Ich finde sie nimmer

Mein Herz ist schwer;

Und nimmermehr.

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80. Schütze, op. cit., p. 166.



Wo ich ihn nicht hab',  
Ist mir des Grab  
Die ganze Welt  
Ist mir vergällt.

Sein hoher Gang,  
Sein edle Gestalt,  
Seines Mundes Lächeln,  
Seiner Augen Gewalt,

Mein armen Kopf  
Ist mir verrückt,  
Mein armen Sinn  
Ist mir zerstückt

Und seiner Rede  
Zauberfluss,  
Sein Händedruck  
Und, ach, sein Kuss!

Meine Ruh ist hin,  
Mein Herz ist schwer;  
Ich finde sie nimmer  
Und nimmermehr.

Meine Ruh' ist hin,  
Mein Herz ist schwer;  
Ich finde sie nimmer  
Und nimmermehr.

Nach ihm schen<sup>u</sup> ich  
Zum Fenster hinaus,  
Nach ihm nur geh ich  
Aus dem Haus.

Mein Bosen drängt  
Sich nach ihm hin,  
Ach, dürft ich fassen  
Und halten ihn!

Und küssen ihn,  
So wie ich wollt,  
An seinen Küssen  
81  
Vergehen sollt!

Faust has wooed and won. Gretchen sits at her spinning wheel  
overawed by her passion. Her heart is heavy. She will never know  
peace again. She can think of nothing but him--how handsome and





noble he was, his laugh, the look in his eyes, his speech, the touch of his hand, his kiss! Then something in her cries out for this-- to kiss him once more and die.

Schubert had been reading the whole of Faust, and this song seemed to sum up all Gretchen's troubles. Then, too, she was a real person, a soul suffering the same tortures that many others suffer. That alone was an inspiration after all the allegorical figures of other poets. He grasped the whole conception of the poem as in a vision, but he had the genius to make of it a reality.

First is heard the monotonous revolution of the spinning wheel in the accompanying figures. Then out of it rises Gretchen's mournful meditation. A crescendo in the music begins with "Seines Mundes Lächeln" (his laugh) and grows gradually. Her heart beats faster when she thinks of his charms. Her foot works the spinning wheel in quickening tempo, and the accompaniment moves up in pitch from D minor to E minor to F. Suddenly, the climax is reached with "Ach, sein Kuss!" (Oh, his kiss). There is a pause; for the first time, she realizes that the wheel has stopped entirely. The accompaniment of these words has been chords. When the silence seems fairly bursting with emotion from this climax, then slowly, faltering at first, the wheel begins its rounds again in D minor, the key in which she expresses the burden of her heart. Then with "Ach, dürft' ich fassen" (Oh, might I embrace him), another crescendo begins and goes to a natural climax with "An seinen Küssen Vergehen sollt!" (With these kisses I would die). Goethe ends the poem here, but Schubert returns to the pensive mood of its beginning and repeats the refrain "Meine Ruh ist hin." If Goethe had done that, it would have spoiled the effect. The refrain had been stated three times and another time might have been monotonous, but in music, Schubert



by repeating it, was able to accomplish something which could not have been done so well without the music, and yet it adds to rather than detracts from Goethe's conception. By returning from the second climax to the refrain, Schubert showed that in spite of her outbursts, her passions and desires, life demanded that she go on in the same way. Her helplessness before the inevitableness of Fate is more strongly shown, and the music itself has an opportunity to round itself out in a well-concluded whole.

This was Schubert's first masterpiece, and it was the first time anything like it had been done. "The plan of the song--an extended plaint, freely varied from stanza to stanza, but held together by persistent rhythmical figures of poetic origin and picturesque value--was as original as everything in the working-out was faultless."

As in 1814, Goethe is again found to lift Schubert above his every day level in 1815, when the latter composed thirty settings of the poet's words. A good many of this group are considered some of his most famous songs, particularly, Erkönig.

Heidenröslein is one of Goethe's poems based directly on a folk-song. The words, "Sah ein Knab ein Röslein steh'n," are so familiar that it would be useless to quote them here. Goethe wrote the lines about 1771, and Schubert wrote the music in 1815, together with about a dozen other little strophic songs, which looked as though they might be intended for ballad operas or social occasions. However, the success of his song does not depend on the elaborateness and complexity of his melody, but rather on his having

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82. Capell, Richard, Schubert's Songs, E. P. Dutton and Co., New York, p. 85.



understood the appropriate musical treatment for such a fresh, spontaneous, and simple pastoral poem. Goethe's poem is made up of three stanzas, six lines each. Schubert's song fits the six-line stanza very nicely into one verse, ternary in form. The first four measures are in the tonic; the next six, in the dominant; and the last four, in the tonic. All stanzas are just alike. This is one of the most perfect examples of Schubert's work in the folk-song type. Often in thinking of Schubert's innovations in the art-song or through-composed, we forget that he did not limit himself to that style entirely, but used the simple folk-song pattern when the words called for it.

Der Erlkönig, considered from the standpoint of poetry, is a masterpiece of dramatic and emotional effect, by virtue of its rhythm of meter and diction. In spite of the fact that a musical setting of any worth for this poem would be a difficult task, it seems to have been a very congenial one, for there are said to be no less than thirty-eight different musical settings of this one ballad.<sup>83</sup> The first was by the Weimar actress, Goren Schröter, who played the role of Dortchen in Die Fischerin when it was first produced in 1782, and consequently sang her own composition. Beethoven planned a setting for it; Reichardt tried his hand at it, but all attempts were eclipsed by Schubert's, with the possible exception of Carl Loewe's, which still receives some credit and by some is valued above Schubert's. Loewe, who was himself a singer, has left all the action to the vocalist, and those soloists who love to act revel in their opportunity. But Schubert, as was consistent with his reforms, put in the accompaniment all that he could in order

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83. Capell, op. cit., p. 109.



that the singer might give a little more attention to tone and less to characterization. By thus relieving the singer, it is possible to keep the interpretation of this ballad strictly to the dramatic rather than the theatrical. The singer must use four moods to represent the terrified child, the sinister Erlking, the harried father, and the narrator. With the combination of Goethe's poem and Schubert's music one is not merely a hearer of the tale, but rather a witness of the event. The piano starts out with a passage of about fifteen bars giving the impression of the flying hoofs, the emotional agitation and the weirdness of the supernatural. There are frequent changes of melody and key to suit the character of the various episodes that follow, but the free form is bound together by the triplet motive, which runs through the entire accompaniment. Capell says: "The whole is an unsurpassed example of Schubert's expressive use of modulation--bold and new and instinctive, yet perfectly balanced."<sup>84</sup>

Schubert did not excel in the ballad form in any except the Erlkönig. The next best is Der König von Thule, also from Goethe's words, but that is surpassed by Liszt's version. Schubert did not spend much time with ballads, but left them to Löwe, who had not half his talent.

These few songs have been given as examples of the three types of lyrical poetry which Schubert chose from Goethe, and as evidence of the remarkable way in which Schubert adapted the music to the spirit of the words. No idea can be given here of the prolific song writing Schubert did except to say that a list of his songs includes over six hundred poems by a hundred authors, of whom the principal are:

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84. Capell, op. cit., p. 112.





Goethe, seventy-two; Schiller, fifty-four; Mayrhofer, forty-eight,  
<sup>85</sup>  
 etc. The large number of different poems of Goethe's which he used  
 is even more amazing when one realizes that for some of them  
<sup>86</sup>  
 he made as many as six different settings. On the whole, those songs  
 which were inspired by Goethe are superior to the rest. This is no  
 small tribute when one knows how every song of Schubert's is con-  
 sidered a gem of lyrical beauty. There is much truth in the state-  
 ment that "with Schubert, for the first time, we find the greatest  
<sup>87</sup>  
 poetry married to the greatest music."

So close an affinity shall not be found between the poet and  
 any other musician after this. There are many who used his poems,  
 and wrote many interesting songs, but gradually the power of Goethe's  
 lyrics weakened in favor of the more romantic writers--those writers  
 who were not touched by Herder's idea of the "integrated" personality  
 and who in consequence have no desire to balance imagination and  
 feeling with reason. The writer agrees with Mr. Istel who says:  
 "The zenith of musical lyricism in conjunction with Goethe's poems  
 was attained by Schubert; under his successors, especially from  
 Schumann onward, romantic poetry gains the upper hand, as seemingly  
<sup>88</sup>  
 more closely akin to the strivings of latter-day musicians." Heine,  
 Uhland, Eichendorff and Rückert were the lyric poets of the period  
 after Goethe, but even so, song-writers were not entirely emanci-  
 pated from the spell of Goethe's lyrics.

Robert Schumann, although he by no means limited himself to that  
 field, stands high as a song writer. In 1840, the year of his marriage

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85. Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Art. on Schubert, p. 635.

86. Schubert made six settings of Nur wer die Sehnsucht Kennt.

87. Vocal Music in Art of Music, vol. V, p. 195.

88. Istel, op. cit., p. 249.



to Clara Wieck, he wrote about one hundred songs. After he had expressed his extreme passion in these songs, he was well satisfied and doubted if he would ever write any more. The principal influence which Goethe had on his songs may be called indirect rather than direct, and then only if it is accepted that the inspiration which Goethe's poetry gave to Schubert had some part in the development of the 'art-song,' which Schumann in turn adopted and strengthened. Schumann made two definite contributions to the development of the art-song. First, he had a more accurate regard for the words of the text. Schubert, in his effort to make the melodies suitable to the spirit of the poem, often had the wrong emphasis on certain words. He was working under a different tradition from Schumann. He was a melodist pure and simple. He put a higher value on pure song. Schumann "demanded of his melody not only that it should do no obvious violence to the metre, but that it should take pains accurately to fit the minor accents and quantities. He tried to make the text as sung not very different from the text as declaimed." <sup>89</sup> The second contribution was a matured harmonic and pianistic technique for the accompaniments. Schubert had done much toward such a style, but his short life and his lack of complete technical understanding caused him to leave this task to Schumann. Schubert's spontaneity, however, was the very virtue which made Goethe's poems of the earlier periods of his life so very congenial.

In Schumann's great song year (1840) Heine was the inspiring poet. Goethe's words seem to have played little or no part in Schumann's songs until somewhat later, and they are not by any means comparable to Schubert's interpretation. Such comments as these are

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89. Art of Music, p. 235.



written about them: "But nothing could be more pitiful than the settings which Schumann about this time gave to some of Goethe's finest poems, especially Wilhelm Meister and the Western Divan Songs." (Exception could be taken to this listing of the 'Western Divan' poems as 'some of Goethe's finest' for they certainly were not.) Those which appear most often in song collections all seem to be from the Westöstlichen Divan, such as Freisinn, Sitz ich allein, Lied der Suleika, and Talismane. The last one of these is the most interesting. Goethe's Talismane is the fourth poem in Moganni Nameh, Buch des Sängers (Book of the Minstrel). The hymn of praise is short, concise, and quite expressive:

91

Talismane

"Gottes ist der Orient!

Gottes ist der Occident!

Nord- und südliches Gelände

Ruht im Frieden Seiner Hände.

Er, der einzige Gerechte,

Will für jedermann das Rechte.

Sei von seinen hundert Namen

Dieses hochgelobt! Amen.

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90. Art of Music, op. cit., p. 253.

91.

God doth rule the glowing East,  
 God doth rule the glorious West,  
 From the north to southern lands  
 All in peace rest in his hands.

Only he, the just, all-seeing,  
 Doth protect each mortal being.  
 Be his name forever praised,  
 Let each voice on high be raised.



Mich verwirren will das Irren;  
 Doch du weisst mich zu entwirren;  
 Wenn ich handle, wenn ich dichte,  
 Gieb du meinem Weg die Richte!"

Schumann's setting begins with stately chords exalting the power of the Lord, while the melody of the first line is simply the C major chord:



As long as the words have to do with the universality of the Almighty, this same triumphant spirit is preserved in the music. The first two lines are repeated at the close of this section. Then with the "Mich verwirren, etc," the accompaniment is made of eighth notes running parallel to the melody, and the mode is temporarily changed from major to minor, giving the feeling of doubt and dependence of the weak individual on God. Goethe ends the poem there, but Schumann, just as Schubert did in Gretchen am Spinnrade, returns to the original verse and gives balance and the proper conclusion to the whole song. Even though Schumann was drawn to more romantic poets before he was to Goethe, there is in his songs to Goethe's words a carefulness of interpretation and a sensitive appreciation which added distinction to the poem itself.

After Schumann, comes Brahms, who is probably the only song-

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91. cont'd.    Doubt may fill my soul with terror  
               Thou canst free the mind from error  
               When in action or reflection  
               Guide me in the right direction.

Goethe, Der Westfälische Divan, Goethe's Werke, vol. IV, p. 7.  
 Translation in Songs of Schumann, Royal Edition, Boorey and  
 Co. London, ed. by J. L. Hatton.






writer besides Schubert whose really great songs number more than fifty. In every type of composition, Brahms was deeply romantic, but he carried into every type a classic regard for form. He was thoughtful to curb the exuberant imagination which in so many writers made the parts attempt to be more important than the whole. For the most part, Brahms's songs are strophic, with perhaps a variation here and there. He believed in giving unity and body to his melodies, and making his songs more like musical architecture and less like running comments on the words. In fact, he had less regard for the words than any other song-writer of the period. Some of the most famous songs for which Goethe's words were used are: "Es rauschet das Wasser" (originally from Jery und Bätely and later from Goethe's collection of Lieder für Liebende); Die Liebende Schreibt (from Goethe's sonnet, to Minna Herzlieb, "Ein Blick von deinen Augen in den meinen"); Tröst in Tränen; Dämmerung senkte sich von oben; Phänomen, Serenade (from Leise um dich nicht zu wecken); and Unüberwindlich (from Hat ich tausend mal geschworen).

Es rauschet das Wasser is a happy radiant duet in which there are two themes, a flippancy alto to represent Bätely, and a dignified baritone for Jery. The two themes are then combined into a beautiful harmonious whole. The contrast between them reappears toward the end; but the solution of the opposition of her roguishness and his seriousness are indicated when the man is given the last words with the theme of the constancy of love.

Die Liebende Schreibt gives a new aspect of the interpretation of Goethe's words. Mendelssohn and Schubert had both tried this song. When Brahms decided to vie with them both, he realized that his predecessors had not kept strictly to the sonnet form. In a letter to Brahms in March, 1869, Philipp Spitta said in this regard:



"This poetic form, with its characteristic interlacing of corresponding verses, is itself peculiarly musical, and must, when clothed in musical periods, have an exceptional charm. I think you have so well succeeded in this that the expert would immediately recognize, even in the absence of the text, the sonnet form. While Mendelssohn only reproduced the constituents of the poem and completely overlooked its form, you have cast a light graceful garment over it, through which one can clearly recognize the individual members of the structure. And so by its return to the original form, your ingenious composition stands in antithesis to that of Mendelssohn." <sup>92</sup> In spite of his adherence to Goethe's sonnet form, this is not an exceptionally interesting song.

Brahms's version of Trost in Tränen is much like Reichardt's. The accompaniment is almost entirely of chords supporting the melody and there is a continuous rhythm of  in the vocal part, both of which traits are found in his predecessor's work. The poem is based in metre and in content of the first two verses upon an old folk-song which partly accounts for the simple type of accompaniment which was preferred. Brahms admired Reichardt a great deal. He not only modeled this song somewhat after his, but, liking Reichardt's setting of one of Goethe's narrative poems of the Weimar period, Harzreise im Winter, Brahms was inspired to write his own version, which is a long work with fully developed parts for orchestra, alto solo and chorus.

At the age of eighty, Goethe wrote the mystical lines which follow:

"Dämmerung senkte sich von oben,

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Schon ist alle Nähe fern;  
 Doch zuerst emporgehoben.  
 Holden Lichts der Abendstern!  
 Alles schwankt ins Engewisse,  
 Nebel schleichen in die Höb;  
 Schwarzvertiefte Finsternisse  
 Widerspiegelnd ruht der See.

Nun im östlichen Bersiche  
 Ahn ich Mondenglanz und Glut,  
 Schlanker Weiden Haargezwiege  
 Scherzen auf der Nächsten Flut.  
 Durch bewegter Schatten Spiele  
 Zittert Lunas Zauberschein,  
 Und durchs Auge schleicht die Kühle  
 Sänftigend ins Herz hinein."<sup>93</sup>

The thought of 'the coming of night to soothe and calm the sorrows

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93. Goethe Gedichte, op. cit., vol. II. p. 410.

Twilight comes down from above  
 All things near seem already far;  
 Then gradually there appear  
 Lovely lights of the evening stars!  
 All is turned into vagueness,  
 Clouds float by in the sky;  
 The deepest black darkness  
 Is reflected in the lake.

Now on the eastern horizon  
 I see the moon glimmer and glow  
 Frail willow trees like tresses  
 Dance on the nearest waves.  
 Through moving play of shadows  
 Trembles Luna's magic light,  
 And through my eye the soothing coolness  
 Creeps into my heart.

The writer apologizes for the unpoetic translations of Goethe's poems and hopes the reader will look upon them only as a vocabulary for the German.



and joys of the day' is beautifully poetic and in this poem is so well expressed that it offers many problems for the musician who would attempt it. But they are solved admirably by Brahms. Gloom and sadness hover over the introduction. The principal theme, which will reappear both in the melody and accompaniment, is given in the bass of the introduction. This mood is retained until the words 'Doch zuerst,' when the music becomes brighter and more dynamic with the appearance of the stars. At the words 'schwarz vertiefte Finsternisse,' the melody returns to that heard at the beginning, but is pitched lower. There are many passages of great beauty in which the effect of the melody is heightened by syncopations, rippling figures and pauses, and the song ends with the same calm reassurance which the poem itself contains.

This is an outstanding example of Brahms's inspiration from Goethe's words. *Phänomen* is another mystical reflection--this one from the Book of the Minstrel in the Westöstliche Divan and written by Goethe in 1814. This invites by its form a most artistic setting which Brahms gave to it in 1833. Serenade (or *Leise, um Dich nicht zu erwecken*) has an exceptional place among Brahms's songs, but it has won this place not by virtue of its close alliance with Goethe's words. Brahms has omitted two verses and has changed several phrases. He has given it a Spanish coloring by the guitar accompaniment which is maintained throughout the whole song except for an interruption in the middle part.

Unüberwindlich is of a cheerful, high-spirited character, both in the music and in Goethe's poem: Hab ich tausendmal geschworen. It represents man's joyful breaking of his resolve not to touch strong drink.

The songs of Franz Liszt, in spite of their comparatively small





number, are of great importance in the history of song writing. "He, better than any other, fused the declamatory and the lyrical-- truth to the words and truth to the emotions.....In the development of the piano part along the purely descriptive side no composer has gone beyond Liszt."<sup>94</sup> The cheapness which entered so much of his works is found less often in the songs than elsewhere. Of the twelve or thirteen which rank with the greatest German songs about half are set to Goethe's words. His setting of Der König von Thule from Goethe's Faust is one of his two finest ballads (the other being 'The Ancestral Tomb' to Uhland's words), and is recognized as superior to all the other many settings, even Schubert's. In this he uses a brief suggestive phrase in the accompaniment which becomes the germ of the whole ballad, being repeated in many connotations and moods.

Wandrer's Nachtlied, or Der du von dem Himmel bist, is another poem by Goethe with the setting of which Liszt was successful. Its simple setting is finer than Schubert's in some people's minds. As almost every song-writer who interested himself at all in Goethe's words, Liszt had a try at Kennst du das Land?, Mignon's famous song in Wilhelm Meister. Liszt's accompaniment commences with a phrase set over an altered chord "which has become famous for its accurate delineation of a mood in a few notes."<sup>95</sup> Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Wolf are some of the few besides Liszt who have attempted this song. But none of them is all that is desired. The time has passed long since for the poem ever to be set to music again. Perhaps Schumann was right when he said: "Beethoven's setting apart, I know of none

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94. The Voice and Vocal Music, in The Art of Music, New York, 1892, p. 295.

95. Ibid, p. 294.



that renders anything like the effect made by the poem itself with-  
 out music." But he should have even excluded Beethoven, for there  
 is something in the poem which no other genius can express so well  
 as Goethe has. It is probably the most admired lyric poem in Ger-  
 man literature. The child is asking her protector to take her with  
 him to Italy where it is warm. But, as Capell so aptly puts it:  
 "We never think of it as a child's poem. The haunting verses express  
 more than the sunstinted northerner's longing for the south. They  
 seem to spring from a deeper nostalgia, they tell of man's age-long  
 dream of a world that the world's not."<sup>97</sup>

Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen,  
 Im dunkeln Laub die Gold-Orangen glühen,  
 Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht,  
 Die Myrte still und hoch der Lorbers steht,  
 Kennst du es wohl?

Dahin! Dahin

Möcht ich mit dir, o mein Geliebter, ziehn.

Kennst du das Haus? Auf Säulen ruht sein Dach  
 Es glänzt der Saal, es schimmert das Gemach,  
 Und Marmorbildern stehn und sehn mich an:  
 Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, getan?  
 Kennst du es wohl?

Dahin! Dahin

Möcht ich mit dir, o mein Beschützen, ziehn.

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96. Capell, Schubert's Songs, p. 99 (quoted).

97. Ibid, p. 99.



Kennst du den Berg und seinen Wolkensteg?  
 Das Maultier sucht in Nebel seinen Weg,  
 In Höhlen wohnt der Drachen alte Brut  
 Es stürzt der Fels und über ihn die Flut;  
 Kennst du ihr wohl?

Dahin! Dahin

98

Geht unser Weg! O Vater, lass uns ziehn!

Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt is another of Goethe's poems which song-writers tried again and again but never seemed to be satisfied with their endeavors. It has already been said that Schubert tried it six times. Others of the more prominent composers who have tried it are Beethoven (four times), Löwe, Schumann, Tschaikowsky and Wolf. It is Tschaikowsky's main claim to distinction as a song writer. Certainly the mood expressed by the poem should be congenial to him! There is in his setting an intensity of feeling, but it is all strained and at times rather banal.

98. Goethe, *Gedichte*, op. cit., vol. I. p. 252.

Knows't thou ~~the~~ land where sweet the citron blows,  
 Where deep in shade the golden orange glows,  
 Where gentle airs are blown from azure skies,  
 Where myrtles breathe, and stately laurels rise?  
 Knows't thou this?

There! There,

O my beloved, would I fly with thee!

Knows't thou the house, with portals gleaming bright,  
 The glittering hall, the courts of softened light,  
 Where marble statues seem to beckon me:  
 Come hither, child! what have they done to thee?  
 Knows't thou this?

There! There,

O my beloved, would I fly with thee.

Knows't thou the mountain that vanishes into clouds?  
 Where toil the mules by heavy burdens bowed,  
 The caverns where the fearful dragons lie,  
 While down the rocks the torrent thunders by;  
 Knowest thou these things?

There! There,

Let's be on our way! O father, let us fly!



German song since Schubert has never lacked for stimulus and growth. After him came Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Löwe and Tschai-kowsky. However much Goethe's poems inspired these men's songs, the inspiration which they gave gradually died away as the world changed. When the Romantic movement was well-nigh passed such song writers as Wolf, Strauss and Reger had quite different poets to inspire them, although Wolf has set a number of Goethe's poems to music. However, the Germany of these latter men was quite a contrast to the stirred up country of the former group. It was a united Germany, increasingly centralized and prosperous. Therefore, it is only natural that a change in artistic expression should occur. But whatever changes have come or may come either in lyric poetry or in song, the first great outbursts of Goethe in poetry and Schubert in song, and the resulting influences of both of them separately and combined, will never be forgotten, and the fruits of their labors will continue to be placed in the first rank in the estimation of all discerning lovers of the German Lied.

Goethe's influence on Romantic music was not confined to the song, although it was in that type that the greatest justice was done him, but it extended into the fields of operatic and instrumental music. The value of the music itself which would come under this discussion does not justify a very detailed consideration, except in a few cases.

Goethe's lifework, Faust, is the one of his large literary achievements which inclined itself most to musical setting, both in opera and in instrumental composition. But, first of all, Beethoven's music for Egmont, is really the greatest instrumental composition inspired by Goethe. This may be accounted for partly





by the fact that Beethoven was the greatest genius of this group and partly by the fact that he was the soul most closely related to the poet, although neither of them realized that quite fully, Goethe far less than Beethoven.

Egmont, as Beethoven has presented him to us, is the same tragic figure, the personification of a suffering and oppressed people. The overture furnishes a synopsis of the inner meaning of the play, giving the general tone of gloom which pervades the drama. Beside the overture, there are eight numbers which make up the incidental music to Egmont (Op. 84.). But the overture is by far the most interesting. It opens with threatening, oppressive chords which are repeated later in shortened rhythms and consequently sound even more cruel and commanding. As in all Beethoven's great works, the development of the themes is an outstanding characteristic. Bekker describes the thematic dialogue thus: "The alternately hopeful, beseeching and defiant replies to the relentless, menacing secondary theme lead up to that terrible moment when, after the appearance of the brutal 'tyrant' theme, a single sword stroke seems to silence replies forever and plunge all in blackest night; but from the mysterious darkness of the wood-wind harmonies ascends a shining song of thanksgiving for victory." By the very skillful manipulation of this material Beethoven has given a magnificent musical summary of Goethe's drama, which, although it does not adhere closely to historical fact, is powerful in its telling of the tyranny of the Duke of Alva in the Spanish Inquisition, and Egmont's human sympathy for the oppressed Netherlanders, in spite of his duty to Spain. On account of his treachery, Egmont is killed, and through



death he is relieved from the turmoil of this world to attain the peace of immortality.

Klärchens Lied in Egmont was the song of Beethoven's which Lobe played, when he was attempting to explain to Goethe the new trends in song-writing (~~see pages 52 and 53~~). Goethe made some effort to understand all Beethoven's music for his drama when he received it in January of 1812. Romain Rolland quotes from Goethe's diary: January 23, 1812, "Abends, von Beethoven's Musik zu Egmont" ("In the evening, Beethoven's music to Egmont"). And on February 20: "In the morning, Herr von Boyneburg played Beethoven's composition to Egmont. He dined with us. After dinner, continuation of the music." <sup>100</sup> Soon after, Beethoven's Egmont was given in the Weimar theatre under Goethe's supervision. The fact that Goethe did not put his stamp of approval on Beethoven's Egmont should not lessen the greatness of the music. If present day opinions concerning the music set to Goethe's works were at all controlled by what Goethe himself thought, Zelter and Reichardt would be greater masters of song than Schubert and Brahms, for he had maintained that the music should only serve as a frame for the lyric poetry.

However, his requirements for the collaboration of dramatic poetry and music were quite different. He agreed with Mozart that poetry should be the obedient daughter of music. Some idea of this has been obtained in his thoughts about music for his Singspiele. In the first part of Faust, begun in 1772, music plays somewhat the same role as it does in the Singspiele. Songs and choruses are interspersed throughout and are not dependent upon the thread of the story for their existence. The ballad of Der König von Thule is sung by

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100. Rolland, op. cit., p. 215.



Gretchen rather like an old familiar song. This is in accord with Goethe's demand for folk songs as one of the three types of music which he wanted for Jery und Bätely (see page 73). The really lovely songs in the first part of Faust can be removed from the play and considered by themselves. Proof of this is in Schubert's setting of Gretchen am Spinnrade and Liszt's König von Thule. But music plays a different part in the second part of Faust, begun in the poet's seventy-fifth year and not published until 1831. Goethe's years of conscious effort to study out musical effects, and his constant and growing love for music had revealed to him the possible interdependence of drama and music. The situation is much more difficult in the second part of Faust, which leads Eckermann to observe: "It will produce a most unusual effect on the stage, that a piece should begin as a tragedy and end as an opera."<sup>101</sup>

Goethe had already furnished a forerunner to the second part of Faust in his melodrama, Proserpina. For that he listed the elements of which an eminent stage-play should consist, giving importance to scenery, declamation, action, costume and particularly, music. (See page 38.) Also, there are elements in the second part of the Magic Flute, such as the treatment of the chorus, which look forward to this part of Faust. Some scenes in the second part of Faust offer an almost insuperable task for a composer, such as the spirit chorus Schwindet ihr dunklen Wölbungen droben. "Here a so exquisitely ethereal music is demanded that the material sound is apt to dispel the illusion, and the actual realization lags far behind the ideal sonority imagined by the poet."<sup>102</sup>

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101. Goethe, Conversations with Eckermann, Jan. 29, 1827, p. 208.

102. Istel, op. cit., p. 252.



Before the whole thing was completed Goethe was hopeful about finding the right composer for it. In 1827, he said: "It should be one, who, like Meyerbeer, has lived long in Italy, so that he combines his German nature with the Italian style and manner. However, that will be found somehow or other." In 1829, he expressed despair that it could not be congenial to any composer living, and that Mozart should have done it. (See page 41.) In that same year he ceased worrying about its music: "Let us wait and see what the gods will send us in due time. Such things must not be hurried. The time will come when the significance of this work will become manifest to mankind, and when directors of theatres, poets, and composers will take advantage of it."

Over a hundred years have elapsed since Goethe spoke those words, and during that time the significance of the work has become manifest to all mankind. In Germany there is no person and no thing any more respected than Faust, not even Goethe himself. Hermann Grimm says: "Faust is to us Germans the sovereign in the host of all creations of European literature." The principal reason why people of all nations do not join in that praise is that translations are so inadequate. Composers also have taken advantage of it, but, unfortunately, the vision that Goethe saw in his own mind for its music has never been realized. Throughout the Romantic period, composers were inspired by the reading of Faust to write some of their greatest compositions, but, unfortunately, their 'greatest' was not on the level of Goethe's greatest.

Among the first Faust music written in the Romantic period

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103. Goethe, Conversations with Eckermann, Jan. 29, 1827, p. 208.

104. Rolland, op. cit., p. 151.

105. Grimm, Herman--Life and Times of Goethe, p. 492.





was Schumann's Scenes from Faust, a work which is not self-contained, but requires for its full understanding an accurate knowledge of the poem. He chose a number of scenes from both parts of the play. The music consists of an overture and three divisions which themselves are divided into sections. From the first part of the drama, he chose a part of the first scene in the garden with Gretchen and Faust; Gretchen before the shrine of the Mater Dolorosa; and the scene in the Cathedral. From the second part, he chose the first scene of the first act (the song of the spirits at dawn, the sunrise and Faust's soliloquy); the scene with the four aged women in the fifth act; and Faust's death. In the third division of the music, the one theme taken is Faust's glorification from the fifth act.

This manner of constructing a musical composition entirely without any central point or connection within itself, except for its entire dependence on another work of art, was an experiment which could only have been successful in the case of a poem like Faust. Even then, it could not hope to be of much success except in Germany where the people know Faust like the Bible. Musically, the third part is the best because it consists of only one central idea, and Schumann seemed to understand the mystic import of Goethe's words. Then, too, the third part dealt with the part of Goethe's tragedy for which the poet himself felt the necessity for music. The second part is less interesting, and the first part, even less so than the second. In these, Schumann has set to music words which Goethe never intended to be sung. The overture is the least convincing of all the Faust music. This diminishing value of the music from the last section to the overture is indicative of the fact that the greatest artistic achievements are done when life is least kind to the creator. When Schumann wrote the overture, he was happy and



relatively carefree. When he wrote the music for Faust's glorification the gloom of his final destiny, insanity, already had begun  
106  
to hover around him.

Hector Berlioz contributed to the music for Faust with his Le Dammation de Faust. In 1829, he was in Paris and read there a French translation of Goethe's poem. Realizing the possibility for song composition, he set eight of the lyrics to music and had them published himself. Not at all satisfied with them, he soon destroyed them, but they afforded some material which he used seven years later in Le Dammation de Faust. For that composition he made his own libretto, borrowing now and then a hint from Gerard Neroal's translation of Goethe. This was performed in Paris in 1846 before a small and unappreciative audience. The Introduction is the best part of the whole work. The number of scenes picked at random from the drama by no means do justice to the real Faust, and are not even German in feeling.

Liszt, in his Faust Symphony, has done something far more interesting than either Schumann or Berlioz from the standpoint of presenting the subtle psychological aspect of Goethe's Faust. The bases of the three movements of the symphony are the characters of the three principal figures of the drama: Faust, Gretchen, and Mephistopheles. The first movement has four themes depicting the various moods of Faust. The introductory theme is the questioning Faust in melancholy solitude; the second theme is brighter, representing Faust possessing the joy of living; the third is Faust's longing for love and the fourth is the proud and energetic hero.

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106. Schumann also wrote an Overture to Goethe's Hermann und Dorothea (Opus 136) and Requiem for Mignon, based on Wilhelm Meister, but these are not among his most famous compositions.



The development of these themes is done in Liszt's characteristic improvisatory manner, and often there is monotonous repetition.

The second movement uses the frame of sonata form, but is rather original in treatment. The exposition has two themes which are not contrasting, but more descriptive of Gretchen. The first, stated by the oboe and solo viola, is of folk-song simplicity. The second theme, given out by the violins, tells of her pensive hesitancy and the instability of Faust's love. In the development of this movement, there are reminiscences of all the themes of the Faust movement, conveying the idea of Gretchen's extreme dependence on Faust. In the recapitulation, the Gretchen themes of the exposition are repeated, but with different orchestral color. The third movement combines the Scherzo and Finale. This is a characterization of Mephistopheles. In it there is brilliant orchestration, and Liszt has painted a scene of Inferno more dazzling than Berlioz's. There is little melodic line, and rhythmic incisiveness becomes the keynote. In the middle of the movement there is a fugue, and Faust's love motive is again presented, but this time in a shrieking, blaring, distorted rush of diabolical glee. The organ and voices then enter in a more serene mood. The final section is not without grandeur, but there is also a saccharine quality which enters so much of Liszt's work and keeps it from being classed among the really great.<sup>107</sup>

Wagner wrote a Faust Overture which, like Liszt's, aims to suggest in a few characterizations the spirit of Goethe's drama. Though this work by no means compares with his great music dramas

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107. Besides this, Liszt's second symphonic poem, Tasso, found its impulse in the works of Goethe and Byron.



such as Der Ring, Die Meistersinger, Parsifal, et al, it is a very successful composition. "Here we have a dramatic genius that need not resort to melodramatic methods and whose conception equals Goethe's own in the profundity of its powers." <sup>108</sup> The Overture opens with a brooding phrase stated by tuba and basses, followed by a dramatic questioning in the strings and emerging into a pathetic appeal by the instruments best suited for such, the violins. This first section gives a clear picture of the troubled Faust. It is Beethoven-like in its classicism and strength. The second theme represents Gretchen. It is much in the same manner as the many other melodies which Wagner created to represent "woman" in his dramatic world. The two themes of Gretchen and Faust serve as a basis for the entire overture and the work ends with a short coda in which is made the final statement of the long searching melody of the violins and an ending of sustained harmonies.

The Faust music which people are most inclined to associate with Goethe's drama and which is by far the most widely known is the opera by Charles Gounod (1813-1893). Despite its success and popularity, the writer ventures to say that this opera is further from the ideal Faust music than any other, with the exception of Berlioz's. At least, Liszt, Schumann, and Wagner had Goethe's drama in mind when they wrote their music. But Gounod based his opera on the text of Barbier and Carré, two French librettists who, in their adaptation of dramas for operas, were capable of the worst vandalism. Their version strips Faust of all its original significance and after removing all the typically German feeling, replaces it with Parisian conventionalities. It treats only the Gretchen

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108. The Orchestra, Art of Music, vol. VIII, p. 248.





episode (Part I). The second part had no popular appeal! In Germany, they prefer to call it Margarethe, out of respect for Goethe's memory!  
109

After all these years, Faust is still without the proper music. And no doubt the time has passed when a suitable opera will ever be written for it. Perhaps Goethe was right when he said: "Mozart should have composed the music for Faust," (See page 41.), but the truth of that statement can never be known. Perhaps it is better for those who appreciate Goethe's drama to build an ideal opera in their minds where they can never be disillusioned by its actual existence.  
110

In spite of the fact that none of these larger choral and instrumental works inspired by Faust have been on the level with the inspiring force, each of them has ranked high among the works of its composer. The truth is that no large orchestral works of the Romantic period were particularly great except those by Brahms and Beethoven, and both of these are classic, in a sense. Brahms only used Goethe in the short songs and smaller choral works, but Beethoven wrote the Egmont music, the Overture of which, from the standpoint of form and interpretation of Goethe's text, is superior to any

109. Another case of vandalism is Ambrose Thomas' Mignon, and, if possible, he has even less concern for ideals than Gounod. The text for this opera was written by the same two who wrote the Faust libretto, Barbier and Carre. "Mignon was, of course, suggested by Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, but the connection is so flimsy that we must dismiss all thought of the German literary classic." (Art of Music, vol. IX, p. 245.) Benjamin Lambord: The Orchestra and Orchestral Music.
110. The writer feels that the ideal composer for a Faust opera would have been Wagner, if he could have given as realistic an interpretation to Goethe's text as he did to the saga of the Nibelungenlied. The second part of Faust is closely akin to Wagner's music drama.



other larger composition which was inspired by Goethe.

Viewing the whole range of song, operatic and orchestral composers of the Romantic period, who came under the spell of Goethe's poetry, one would conclude that those who came nearest to doing him justice were two of his own contemporaries--Beethoven and Schubert. Both of them sought out Goethe, and were eager for his recognition, but both he ignored--Schubert, because he was young and untried, and Beethoven, because he represented the beginning of the very epoch which made the poet immortal in music--the Romantic period.



## IV

To sum up Goethe's relation to Romantic music it might be said, first of all, that Goethe was by no means a finished musician. During his school days, he had some slight training in the playing of a clavier, 'cello and flute, but by the time he went to Weimar the instruments, if he ever possessed them, were probably stored away in a trunk in the attic of his house in Frankfurt. All during his life he had not a few opportunities to hear concerts and to be in contact with musicians of note. However, he chose for his closest companions and helpers, three composers who showed some signs of promise in their day, but whose work posterity has chosen to ignore. These were Kayser, Reichardt and Zelter.

There was a period in Goethe's life, beginning around the time when his engagement to Lili was broken off, when the poet felt a need for relaxation from the steady emotional high-pitch which was required in writing his profound works. This relaxation was found in the writing of Singspiele, a very popular and unpretentious type of amusement and entertainment which held sway in Germany during the eighteenth century. Goethe's Singspiele were not very successful, mainly because they lacked the proper music. Of all of them, Jery und Bätely, a sort of Swiss idyll, was the most enjoyed on the Weimar stage. Some of the loveliest lyrics which Goethe has written were originally incorporated in some of the Singspiele, but later on, after he had exhausted his ideas on this type of expression,



Goethe published most of those lyrics separately.

Weimar was very lacking in great musicians during Goethe's residence there. Had it not been for Anna Amalia's circle, Goethe's private choirs, and the Weimar theater, which Goethe directed for many years, the city would have had little or nothing to offer. Of all the music which Goethe knew, Mozart's was the most pleasing to him. He could not appreciate the great advances which Beethoven was making in instrumental music, nor could he look upon the changes in song-writing any more favorably. However, parallel to the trends which instrumental music was taking with Beethoven, were those which poetry was beginning to indicate with Goethe and songs with Schubert. They were all three products of the Storm and Stress period which saw the glorious struggle between form and expression. Later, in the real Romantic period, expression came out victorious, but nothing has ever been so grand as the short time in the struggle of those souls of the Storm and Stress period when the two conflicting elements, form and expression, held each other in balance. Goethe was, through Herder's influence, aided in getting that balance, and because he was such a great master of the German language, and understood better than anyone the real music and rhythm of language, and because his works are based on noble abstract truths that only music can hope to reveal, Goethe had a more widespread influence on Romantic composers than any other single writer. Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt and Brahms were the chief song writers who were inspired by Goethe's words. Beethoven, Schumann, Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner were the principal composers of instrumental works who aimed to write music for Goethe's dramas. In the case of both songs and orchestral works, they were more successful if they attempted to create in music the same mood and spirit that Goethe





had created in words. Hence the use of the through-composed art-song and symphonic poem and overture.

Next to some of the lyrics, Faust was the most frequently treated by composers, but Faust has never to the present day had the right music.

Of all the musicians who sensed the musical content of Goethe's verse, Schubert and Beethoven stand out as having best interpreted in music the spirit which places Goethe's poetry among the best in the world.



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